

Introduction

This study addresses the relationship between religious fundamentalism and the internet. It aims to be a critique of the conception that religion and modernization are inherently incompatible; that modernization leads to the death of religion, as promoted by the supporters of the secularization theory. I argue that the notion that religion and modernization are essentially incompatible is an inaccurate characterization and understanding of the interplay between the two forces; rather, both co-exist and mutually reinforce one another. To support this, I analysed Salafism, a transnational Islamic fundamentalist movement, and its use of the internet, a global product that reflects and represents modernity, within the Indonesian context. Particularly, I examined how the Salafi group use the internet by attempting to uncover the ways they employ website in accordance with their ideological purposes. Salafism has adopted communication technology since its presence in the end 1980s, particularly the internet after the fall of Suharto regime in 1998. This phenomenon is interesting as it refers to the fact that though it is ideologically ultra orthodox, Salafism is technologically modern movement. In this context, I propose that religious fundamentalism is not anti modern movement as seen in the ways the Salafis use the internet to localize the global force of media and spiritualize the technology for their socio-religious needs and interests.

The conception that religion and modernization are inherently incompatible can be seen in works by scholars who advocated the “secularization thesis”. It has been argued that as modernization spreads, religion would become socially and culturally irrelevant in the human life of modern society and an atheistic set of beliefs would be a dominant force as the religious faith was falling down. Eventually, religion would vanish from the lives of modern secular society in the face of modernization (Shupe 1990; Fox 2001; Stark 1999; McGrath 2004). This argument holds that “modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and the minds of individuals” (Berger 1999). There were several reasons which were used to support the secularization theory (Norris and Inglehart 2004 cited in Kluver and Cheong 2007, p. 1123-4). First, as science and technology began to develop, traditional people would turn to empirical explanations to understand natural phenomena, making religious beliefs unnecessary. Second, as their educational levels increased, people

would become more sceptical towards religious faith, considering that religious belief systems were “vestigial remnants of a pre-modern society”. Finally, religious authorities would lose their grip and influence over society as other forms of authority resulting from the secular system of society, such as the state, scientists, and educational leaders, emerged to exercise power over the domains of life that had traditionally been dominated by religious leaders. In all of these arguments lies an inherent assumption that religion was inherently incompatible with modernity and *vice versa*; the more modern a society is, the more likely it would be atheistic; modernization was seen as a global force that would necessitate the death of religious faith.

The argument of the incompatibility of modernization and religion has been used to explain the interaction between religious believers and communication media, particularly the internet. Investigating the connection between religiosity and the internet use, Armfield and Holbert (2003 cited in Kluver and Cheong 2007, p. 1124), for example, argue that “the more religious a person is, the less likely he or she will use the internet”. They draw their argument upon an assumption that as the internet embodies the ethos of secular worldview, religious people are less likely to use it. This ethos, they believe, will hinder religious persons from using and appropriating the internet.

This is echoed by some observers who have argued that the internet presents potential threats to religion. It is believed that the internet embodies a certain value system that is potentially harmful to religious beliefs. Bockover (2003 cited in Kluver and Cheong 2007, p. 1124), for example, asserts that the internet constitutes a threat to religious traditions, as exemplified by its introduction into Confucian societies, because it symbolizes and promotes the American values of love of free expression, desire for financial gain, and belief in equal opportunity, which are alien to communitarian values of Confucianism. She argues that the internet is not “culturally neutral” because it “tells us more about who we are and we value in America than virtually any other technology”. Adamu (2002 cited in Kluver and Cheong 2007, p. 1124) supports this argument saying that “the internet itself is an American concept” that is used as an “ideological weapon” to destroy Islam and Muslims.

Another potential threat is that the internet can undermine traditional religious authority. Barker (2005 cited in Kluver and Cheong, p. 1124-5) argues that the internet constitutes a challenge to religious authorities by presenting alternative information that destabilizes traditional structure of religious knowledge and creating critical leaders who challenge the legitimation of traditional religious authorities to define religious teachings.

Finally, the internet is seen as a threat to the cohesiveness of religious community. Personal experiences of the internet can lead to the fragmentation of a religious community by detaching its members from shared rituals, collective identity and communal participation. Schroeder, et.al (1998 cited in Kluver & Cheong 2007, p. 1125) point out that the absence of physical proximity of online experiences prevents members of a religious community from observing their religious beliefs traditionally practiced. Likewise, Dawson (2005 cited in Kluver & Cheong 2007, p. 1125) argues that online religious experiences cause religion “detached from real places, real people, and a real sense of shared time and cultural harmony...collective conscience and collective effervescence”. In all of these arguments, the authors suggest that the internet is a harmful product of modernity to religion and its acceptance by religious communities will make religion lose something of what it is supposed to be.

Significance of the study

In a broader perspective, the significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the notion of the failure of the secularization theory in predicting the death of religion in the face of modernization. Some scholars have argued the conviction of the incompatibility of religion and modernization has become obsolete and the prophecy that religion would come to an end as society experienced modernization is not empirically proven. Not only does religion survive in the face of modernization, but also acquires new roles and identities in the contemporary society. Berger (1999), for example, is convinced that global society of world today is “as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever”. He argues that religious communities and institutions have developed an adaptation strategy. They have taken and to some degree modified modern ideas and values in the light of their own interests. As a result, religion has survived in the face of secularized world, and even flourished in various parts of the world. This is echoed by Stark (1999) who believes that secularization theory has suffered from empirical evidence from the very start.

In particular, this study is expected to give contribution to the conception of the ‘good’ relationship between religion and the internet. Campbell (2005) believes that religious communities have adopted the internet, by spiritualizing and giving a kind of religious legitimacy on the technology. Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai (2005) emphasize that religious communities have developed what so called “cultured technology” by which they reshape and being reshaped by the internet. This is also emphasized by Thompson (1995)’s argument

of the appropriation and localization process of the global media, such as the internet, by individuals or groups in accordance with specific-temporal locales where they are situated. In addition, the value of this study lies in its contribution to the study of the connection between the internet and society in the context of contemporary Indonesia (Hill and Sen 1997, 2002, 2008; Lim 2002, 2003, 2003, 2005; Brauchler 2003, 2004), which suffers from the lack of study of interplay between Islamic fundamentalism and the internet. It hopes to fill the gap by examining the relationship between Salafism and the internet.

Method

My preliminary investigation revealed that there are around twenty Indonesian Salafi websites, which are linked to local and global similar websites. For the purpose of this study, the analysis was focused on the purist Salafi website at www.salafy.or.id. The choice was based on that the fact it represents the most orthodox Salafi movement, which was expected to help our understanding the relationship between religious fundamentalism and modernization. In addition, the limited time and resources as well as the nature of this study as a coursework research project restricted me to analyse much more Salafi websites.

The data were collected through online observation. A total of 58 postings posted by the web administrator and contributors were collected from the Salafi website to examine the ways the Salafis use the internet. The time period analysed was 2003-2008. The postings were analysed for topic, tone of arguments, and type of response. The methodology involved textual analysis of the collected postings to uncover categories of the Salafi use of the internet. In this study, text comprises the Salafi website, including articles, postings and images. I allowed the categories to emerge from the postings base upon similarities and differences. As Patton (1980 cited in LaSalle 1992, p. 6) said, “the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis”. I believe this facilitates the emergence of the connection between the Salafi worldview and the internet use.

The analysis involved the first step of initial reading of the postings to develop a general sense of their content or a “long preliminary soak” (Hall 1975 cited in Feldstein and Acosta-Alzuru 2003, p.159) in the web texts, which were suspected as to have answers to the research questions. The next step was to develop categories of the ways the Salafi employ the internet. Then, I reread the postings and articles and placed them into one of the defined categories. When a posting reflected two or more categories, I placed it into a category based

on its most appropriate content. The postings and articles were classified in the following way: ideological, polemical, communicative, and contextual uses of the internet. These analytical stages used the original texts in Indonesian. Only material quoted in this study and the title of postings were translated by me to English.

There are some issues related to this methodology. As a case study, the findings of this study may pertain only to the interplay between the Islamic fundamentalism and the internet. And as a textual analysis, this study may suffer from the lack of empirical explanation and statistical data. But, I believe that the strength of this study lies most in its depth and its position as a clear evidence of the coexistence between religion and modernization. I also believe that the findings of this study reflect the same patterns of the internet use by most of religious fundamentalist communities.

Thesis structure

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction that explains its background, research questions, aims, focus, methodology and structure. An overview of works on the secularization thesis and the interplay between religion and internet is provided as a background and this study's position among. Chapter two deals with a review of literature on the internet and society in the Indonesian context. It aims to identify the existing studies on the Internet and society in contemporary Indonesia and locate the possible position of my study in the field by filling the gap in the existing literatures. Chapter three discusses the rise of religious fundamentalism in post-Suharto Indonesia. It aims to provide a historical background of the (re)emergence of Islamic fundamentalism after the fall of Suharto's Orde Baru (New Order) regime in 1998, which facilitated the spread of Salafism owing to the relatively absent of state control of public sphere and the coming of the internet to the country in the mid 1990s. Chapter four explains the Salafi identities by exploring the Salafi ideology and practices. It seeks to provide basic knowledge of the Salafi identities in order to better understand the interplay between the Salafi movement and the internet. This is followed by chapter five, which attempts to uncover the ways the Salafis articulate their identities by using the internet for their religious needs and purposes. Analysis was devoted to explain the Salafi use of the internet in the framework of the localization and appropriation processes of the global media force within a certain set of localities and purposes. Finally, chapter six summarizes the study's conclusions.

Literature Review

The study of the intersection between the internet, politics and culture in the Indonesian contexts is still in its infancy. The attention of scholars, either Indonesians or non-Indonesians, is relatively scant. Some scholars, however, have paved the way to the growing interest in the study of the internet in the world's largest Muslim country. It can be said that the internet study in Indonesia has not attracted scholars attention until *gerakan reformasi* (the reform movement) came into play in Indonesian politics, which brought about the downfall of the President Suharto and his regime, known as *Orde Baru* (the New Order), in 1998. This section aims to identify the existing studies on the Internet and society in contemporary Indonesia, locate the possible position of my study in the field of the internet studies in Indonesia, and identify its possible contribution to the field by filling the gap in the existing literatures.

For the purpose of this study, the existing studies on the internet, society and culture in Indonesia can be classified into two categories. First, general and introductory works that deal with the rise and early development of the internet in Indonesia (Hill and Sen 1997). Second, focused studies that examine specific issues on a particular local context regarding the internet and student movement and Islamic fundamentalism (Lim 2002, 2004, 2005), the internet, state, corporate economy and civil society (Lim 2003a and 2003b), the internet and the Maluku conflict (Brauchler 2003 and 2004, Hill and Sen 2008), and the internet and Islamic radicalism (Lim 2005). In general, these studies introduce two arguments in regard to the relation between the internet and society in the Indonesian context. First, internet is a political tool for promoting democratization, civil-society, self-definition and collective action. Second, internet is a medium for constructing religious identities.

A. Internet as a political tool for democratization

To the best of my knowledge, the scholarly attention to the internet study in Indonesia begins with David Hill and Krishna Sen's (1997) work, 'Wiring the *warung* to global gateways: the Internet in Indonesia'. It deals with a preliminary survey of the internet's potential as a medium of democratization in Indonesian politics in the mid 1990s. Hill and Sen begin their study with a review of the Internet's emergence and development in

Indonesia based on their six month visit to Yogyakarta, a higher education heartland of Indonesia, in 1996. They argue that the development of the Internet in Indonesia cannot be separated from the phenomenon of *warung internet* or *warnet* (the internet café). Starting at major cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Surabaya, the *warung internet* begun to mushroom in 1996. Initially owned and operated by the government, it then spread to other cities with the increasing private and individual ownership and operation (Hill and Sen 1997, p. 68-71).

Hill and Sen's work represents an example of the studies which argue that the internet has become a political tool for democratization in that it provides users with a forum for freedom of expressions, particularly the political ones. Due to the nature of the internet, users can obtain alternative sources of information, which is different from official government sources, and express their opinions uncensored online. Moreover, through the Internet local voices that are not covered by mainstream media can get more chance to be expressed freely and go global (Hill and Sen 1997, p.84-87).

The interplay between the internet and politics is also seen in Hill and Sen's latest book (2008), *Internet in Indonesia's democracy*. Dealing with the connection between the media, technology and democracy, it examines how Indonesia is using and being reshaped by the internet. Contrary to the assumption that a global phenomenon has global implications, Hill and Sen argue that the internet use should be understood within the limits of socio-political contexts of nations and locals. Based on the case of Indonesia at the turn of the twentieth century, they suggest that a particular political change provides a unique context of the global phenomenon. In other words, Indonesia has provided a specific context for the internet in which we can understand the specific consequences of this global phenomenon (Hill and Sen 2008).

The argument that internet is a political tool for democratization is echoed in some works by Merlyna Lim (2002, 2003a, 2003b). In her 'The internet, social networks and reform in Indonesia' (2003a), Lim addresses the relationship between the internet and democracy using the Indonesian context. The questions such as how the internet could help Indonesia become a more democratic country should be answered by exploring a deeper context beyond the internet and its users. The connection between technology, such as the internet, and society is rooted in a cultural and historical local context, "a nexus where technology and society meet, and the basis in which technology's impact spreads widely through society" (Lim 2003a, p. 274). Lim argues that the internet has played an important

role in providing a public sphere where people can communicate and share information far beyond the state control and intervention. The key idea here is not the internet itself, but the linkages among the internet nodes that created a social network of the *warung internet* or *warnet* (the internet café), cities, towns and villages where individuals and communities encounter (Lim 2003a, p. 284). However, the internet's role as a public sphere is under threat from the growth of culture industries and the shifting to a corporate economy with large corporation, which penetrate into the ownership and control of Indonesian cyberspace (Lim 2003a, p. 285).

In another article, 'Cyber-civic space in Indonesia' (2002), Lim analyses the role of the internet as a means for constructing and deconstructing civil society in Indonesia by tracing two historical episodes of the contemporary Indonesia: the May 1998 student movement that led to the downfall of President Suharto and the rise of Laskar Jihad (the Jihad Troopers).¹ She argues that the questions of whether the internet creates or destroys civil society and democracy cannot be answered in the technological and virtual world of the internet itself. Rather, she asserts, the questions will be resolved by understanding the specific local contexts in which the internet is reshaping and being reshaped. The coming of the internet to a country such as Indonesia has resulted in the localisation processes in which its electronic signals transform into potent social meanings, interact with local power, and reshape local politics (Lim 2002, p.384). The case of Indonesia indicates that the internet can be a medium for the establishment of cyber-civil space where people have a public sphere without state intervention and control as shown by the social protest in 1998. But, Lim also doubts that the post- Indonesia will witness the flowering of the civil society for the country is likely to experience a fragmented society, communal resistance, and instability as shown by the emergence of the Laskar Jihad and its internet uses (Lim 2002, p. 398-399).

Moreover, Lim elaborates the role of the internet as a political tool for self-definition and collective action. In her 'From *war-net* to net-war: the internet and resistance identities in Indonesia' (2003b), Lim shows how the internet is used as a political tool for constructing and promoting self-definition and collective action. The key point of her arguments is "that technological transformation is embedded in power relations and that localities -nations, cities and communities- are sites of the nexus of state, corporate, and civil society struggles

¹ Laskar Jihad was a paramilitary wing of the Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah (FKAWJ; the Communication Forum of the Supporters of the Sunnah and the Community); founded by Jafar Umar Thalib in 1998, it was involved in the Maluku conflict by sending its jihad fighters to defend their fellow Muslims against the "Christian attackers" in Ambon. For a comprehensive study of Laskar Jihad, see Noorhaidi (2005).

over the choice, use, and transformation of technologies such as the internet” (Lim 2003b, p. 234). According to her, the internet in the Indonesian context has become a focal point of the power contest between the state, corporate and civil society. In this contest, identity construction is a driving force in the technology transformation process driven by the state, corporate and civil society forces (Lim 2003b, p. 234). The Indonesian experience shows that the internet has been projected into the power constellations between the state, corporate economy and civil society and transformed by a specific relation among these social forces. The internet is a product of social and institutional relations which is localized through processes of social, political and economic changes. The internet is not simply a neutral technology and source of information; rather it is a site and means for identity creation and affirmation, reshaping and being reshaped by the state, corporate and civil society (Lim 2003b, p. 246-247).

Lim’s ‘The polarization of identity through the internet and the struggles for democracy in Indonesia’ (2004) further explains the use of the internet for promoting self-definition and collective action. Using the cases of the student movement in 1998 and the anti-Americanism movement post 9/11, she examines the identity formation through the internet. For Lim, in the Indonesian context, the Internet becomes a source and medium for identity construction and filtering in that it enables users to access information from relatively unlimited global sources and at the same time interpret them in accordance with local identity contexts and interests. The internet has helped to create and sustain the identities of political legitimization (by the state) and resistance (by Islamic fundamentalist groups) and anti-regime (by student movement) (Lim 2004).

B. Internet as a tool for promoting religious identities

In addition, the existing studies reveal that the internet has served well the religious communities in that it plays a role as a medium for promoting their religious identities. This argument reflects in Merlyna Lim’s ‘Islamic radicalism and anti-Americanism in Indonesia: the role of the internet’ (2005). It is an excellent study on how the Internet technology interacts with cultural movements. Specifically, using Indonesia as a local site, it examines the roles the internet has played as a medium in propagating religious identities, particularly the ideas of radical Islam and anti-Americanism. Focusing her analysis on the cases of the Laskar Jihad website and mailing lists connected to fundamentalist and radical Islam, Lim argues that the internet plays as a key tool for self-definition and collective action for radical

Islamic groups, and dissemination of a conspiracy theory that United States and Israel are always committed to destroy Islam (Lim 2005, p.45-46). She also finds out that the internet use by Indonesian radical groups to disseminate global Islamic radicalism does not necessarily mean that they ignore national and local issues. Through cyberspace, they get involved actively in fostering global fundamentalist identity, and at the same time establish a local (national) identity (Lim 2005, p. 44).

However, cyberspace does not work alone in a country such as Indonesia where most of the people are not connected to the internet. In promoting Islamic radicalism and anti-Americanism, the radical groups in Indonesia also use other media such as print media. The internet needs to be linked to other media to extend its influence to wider audience (Lim 2005, p. 46-47). This strategy was relatively successful, but not strong enough to persuade the audience to do extreme actions such as jihad in the forms of physical war and killing (Lim 2005, p. 48).

This is echoed in works by Birgit Brauchler. They deal with the intersection between the internet, religion, and identity. In her article ‘Cyberidentities at war: religion, identity and the internet in the Moluccan conflict’ (2003), Brauchler studies the internet use by religious groups involved in the Maluku conflict.² She analyses the characters and strategies of the actors, Muslims and Christians, who were involved in the conflict to uncover their performance in constructing collective religious identity based on their website contents and postings (the websites of the Crisis Center of the Diocese of Ambon [Catholic], Masariku Network [Protestant], and the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah [Muslim]). She argues that rather than being used to close the gap in the troubled Maluku society, the internet was used to expand the existing communal division in which religions, Islam and Christianity, as identity markers played a key role in the construction of collective identity (Brauchler 2003, p.147). In other words, the conflict was extended into cyberspace by the cyber-actors, Muslim and Christian groups, that were involved in the conflict. In her analysis,

²The conflict in Maluku (an island in Eastern Indonesia) broke out in 1999 and those involved were mainly grouped around religion as their identity marker, between Christians and Muslims. Hundreds of churches and mosques were destroyed, thousands of people were killed and hundreds or thousands were displaced. There are some studies aimed to analyse cultural, ideological and political backgrounds of the conflict. See e.g. George Aditjondro, ‘Guns, pamphlets and handie-talkie’: how the military exploited local-ethno religious tensions in Maluku to preserve their political and economic privileges’, in Ingrid Wessel and Georgia Wimhofer (eds), *Violence in Indonesia*, Abera-Verlag, Hamburg, pp. 100-128; Dieter Bartels (2000), *Your God is no longer mine: Muslim-Christian fratricide in the Central Moluccas (Indonesia) after a half-millennium tolerant co-existence and ethnic unity*, www.indopubs.com/archives.0401.html.

Brauchler writes that based on the case of the Maluku conflict, the internet has played some significant roles. First, it brought local events to global level and disseminated them widely and easily. Second, through the internet imagined communities are established, solidarity is strengthened, and sense of belonging is generated. Third, the internet has provided audiences with first-hand information from local people, which may had the same impact as a well-known magazine or author (Brauchler 2003, p. 150).

Another work on the Maluku conflict by Brauchler (2004), 'Islamic radicalism online: the Moluccan mission of the Laskar Jihad in cyberspace,' is worth mentioning here. Focusing on the case of the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (FKAWJ), an Islamist group emerged after the fall of Suharto, Brauchler analyses the presence of the Laskar Jihad, a paramilitary wing of FKAWAJ, in cyberspace and its use of the internet for its mission in Maluku. She argues that the phenomenon of the Laskar Jihad online suggests that not only did the Maluku conflict happen in reality, but also expanded into cyberspace. Using the internet technology, the Laskar Jihad constructed an image and created an identity in accordance with its offline religious-political principles. In this sense, through the internet Laskar Jihad transferred the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism into cyberspace. Though it was a minority group, which did not represent the majority of Indonesian Muslims or Maluku Muslims, the Laskar Jihad came into prominence through its brilliant use of cyberspace and its remarkable offline performance (Brauchler 2004, p. 280).

The extension of the offline conflict into online environment is also analysed by in Hill and Sen' article (2002), 'Netizens in combat: conflict on the internet in Indonesia', dealing with the development of the internet use in post- Indonesia, is one of the first works that analyse the intersection between the internet and socio-cultural artefacts. It examines how the internet becomes a conflict site, political or cultural, and a place of the extended offline conflicts. Focusing their analysis on AMBONnet, a mailing list of global Maluku (Moluccan) community and its sympathizers, Hill and Sen analyse how the Maluku conflict has been extended to cyberspace by the conflicting actors. At the beginning, AMBONnet was a non-sectarian mailing list in which Ambonese posters with different religious backgrounds participated. But, then it transformed, as Hill and Sen found out, into a site for the extension of the offline conflict when the conflict in the Maluku islands was heightened (Hill and Sen 2002, p. 177-182). Based on this transformation, Hill and Sen suggest that there is a need to shift in the internet research from technology-focused, namely the internet itself, to the actions of the community of the internet users or "the netizens" as they call. As the case of

Maluku shows, the internet has become a medium of communal conflict in which the real world is also found in the virtual world of cyberspace (Hill and Sen 2002, p.182).

In sum, these studies that deal with the interplay between the internet and socio-political entities in Indonesia have introduced the concept of the localization process of the global force of information technology for particular needs and purposes. It appears that the studies above provide important preliminary and focused analysis to understand the connection between technology and societies and the localization process of the internet in the Indonesian context. In particular, studies on the connection between the internet and Islamic fundamentalism are essential in understanding the localization of the internet by the fundamentalist groups in constructing and maintaining their resistance identities. However, these studies are focused too much, and only, on the Laskar Jihad phenomenon. In my opinion, what is missing from these studies is an examination of the basic ideology of Islamic fundamentalism, known as Salafism (*Salafiyyah*), and its use of the internet in constructing and promoting its Salafi identities. This is crucial because Salafism constitutes as an ideological foundation of most, if not all, Islamic fundamentalist movements. So, an analysis of how the supporters of Salafism use the internet in promoting and communicating their identities cannot be neglected here as it will help us better understand this transnational fundamentalist movement within a local context of Indonesia.

It is against this context that this study is situated. It aims to identify a possible contribution to the study of the connection between the internet and society in the Indonesian context, particularly to the notion of the localization process of the internet, and to fill a gap in the existing studies on the internet and Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia by examining the Salafi movement and its use of the internet.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in post-Suharto Indonesia

Indonesia post- regime has seen the emergence of new social and political movements that were organized by various groups that previously controlled by the government such as students, workers, and teachers. In politics, there was the rise of the new political parties with various background and principles from nationalist to religious ones. In the 1999 election, there were registered 150 political parties, but only 48 parties were eligible to take part in the election. This was considerable compared to that in the New Order era, in which only three parties were allowed to participate in the political processes. The emergence of these massive socio-political movements can be said as “delayed responses”, borrowing Marty and Appleby’s (1991) term, to the authoritarian Suharto regime.

However, this period also witnessed the rise of religious fundamentalist movements by many interest groups in the country. Islamic fundamentalism is one of these religious movements that have characterized Indonesia after the collapse of New Order era. Like other marginalised groups, after being suppressed by the regime for more than three decades, Islamic fundamentalist groups had freedom and opportunities to organize their potentials, consolidate their power, play roles and take benefit from the dynamics of new socio-political life. The prominent groups of them are Front Pembela Islam (FPI, the Defenders of Islam Front), led by Habib Rizieq Shihab, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI, the Assembly of Indonesian Jihad Fighters) led by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Laskar Jundullah (the God’s Soldiers) chaired by Agus Dwi Karna, Laskar Jihad (the Jihad Troopers) led by Jafar Umar Thalib, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (the Indonesian Party of Liberation) with Ismail Yusanto as its spokesman, and the Salafi movement.

The emergence of Islamic fundamentalism after the fall of the regime owes to the following causal factors. First, the relatively absence of the state control on civil spaces, particularly on Islam as the religion of majority. Like Sukarno government, the regime viewed religion, particularly Islam, as a principal source of identity that could be mobilized to challenge its rule and the policy of the secularized state. Hence, it undertook attempts aimed at controlling Islam and using its identity for the state purposes (see e.g. Effendy 2004). For example, this can be seen in the policy of the unlawful political expressions of Muslims and the ban of the political parties whose ideology were based on religion. This also involved the

regulation of political parties that forced all parties with Islamic backgrounds to fuse under one party, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP; the United Party of Development), which was orchestrated to support the government. Another form of marginalisation was the state use of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for containing Islam by creating a project of modern, tolerant and apolitical Indonesian Islam and promoting an Islamic *dakwah* that was acceptable to the state policy (Lim 2002, p. 390).

However, the policy of containing Islam lost its grip when the 's New Order regime collapsed in 1998 following the people movements reacted against the regime failure in overcoming the economic crisis 1997. The fall of the regime meant the loss of the state ability to control the socio-political life of people as the identities previously suppressed had freedom to emerge in the country's socio-political arena. The new government had no choice other than adapting itself to a new period of democracy by, for example, deregulating its policies of containing civil spaces.

Another factor that helped the Islamic fundamentalism to come up was the coming of the internet to the country in the 1990s. Like in the most countries, the internet started to grow significantly in Indonesia in the mid 1990s. Under regime and particularly BJ Habibie, a minister of research and technology, later vice president and then president in 1998, the government adopted the internet as one of the major strategies to bolster the national development. It seemed that the government was determined to develop the internet connection across the regions and socio-economic classes. Due to this, in 1997, the Inter@ctive Week included Indonesia as one of the "emerging 20" nations that had "a plethora of untouched opportunities for expanding the internet" because it met the criteria that were attractive to US equipment providers: it was in its technological beginnings and its government was committed to expand the advanced communications as a vital means to sustain the national economic growth (CyberAtlas 1999 cited in Hill and Sen 2002).

Yet, the 1997 crisis hit Indonesia causing the collapse of the country's economy and the fall of the regime in 1998 brought about a new landscape of the Indonesian internet. It coincidentally led to the collapse of the state-linked corporate internet service providers (ISPs) and finally resulted in the loss of the state and its corporate cronies to control the Indonesian internet. This provided individuals, groups and non-state linked companies with opportunities to expand the internet across the country. During this period, the *warnet* (warung internet), a small scale internet café owned by individuals or small scale

entrepreneurs, started growing substantially in Indonesia, particularly in Java (Lim 2002, p.393).

The importance of the internet in Indonesia lies in the fact that since the 1997 crisis it has contributed to the society by providing spaces where people can interact and express their identities without the state control. Particularly, through the internet people can gain and share information that has been previously controlled by the government through the infamous Ministry of Information including forbidden information about the government corruption scandals and left-wing materials. It can be said that for the first time through the internet people finally have their own civic spaces to reveal their identities and express their thoughts without the overt control of the state (Lim, 2002, p. 393).

It was against this background that Islamic fundamentalism began to (re)emerge taking benefit of the relatively absent of the state control over civil and political spaces of the Indonesian societies. The political landscape of post-Suharto Indonesia has provided the fundamentalist group with opportunities to express their identities that were previously restricted by the state. They made use of the new freedom resulted from the newly born democratic, but unstable country. Moreover, the coming of the information technology revolution in the form of the internet to the country helped create civil spaces for society. The Salafi community was one of the first fundamentalist groups who welcomed and embraced the internet as a tool to promote their identities and develop networks with other local and global similar groups as will be explained in the next chapter.

Salafism: identity and contemporary development

A. Salafism defined

The term Salafism (Arab: *Salafiyyah*) is derived from the Arabic *salaf* (plural: *aslaf*), which means “predecessor”. In the Islamic lexicon, *salaf* refers to the first three generations of Muslim community that include the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*sahabah*), a generation after the *sahabah* (*tabi'in*), and a generation after who followed the *tabi'in* (*tabi al-tabi'in*). The Salafis believe that the Salaf were the best Muslim generations because they learned and implemented the pure Islam under direct guidance of the Prophet or those who knew him. So, Salafism refers to an Islamic ideology that makes the Salaf as a model and direction in its attempts to understand and implement the ideal and authentic Islam in the present and future. One who follows the method of the Salaf is called *salafi* (Arabic: *salafiy*; plural: *salafiyyin*).

From a historical point of view, the earliest usage of the term Salafism does not refer to any particular Islamic movement or party. Rather, the term is associated with the general attitude or mind set of the post-first century Muslim community on the importance of following the first century religious and political authorities who were believed as having consistently practiced the true messages of Islam as instructed by the Qur'an and best exemplified by the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, the modern Salafi movement can be described as a project of reviving the historical legacy of the Prophet, his companions and two Muslim generations who came after them (the Salaf) and materializing the authentic past in the present and the future (Duderija 2007, p. 347).

Salafism is a transnational movement which aims to propagate the puritanical approach to Islam and connect the members of an “imagined community” of true believers all over the world. Through its actual members cannot be accurately estimated, the Salafi movement is one of the fastest-growing Islamic movements, which spreads virtually to all countries. Its contemporary presence can be seen in various parts of the world including Middle East, Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, and America. The development of the modern Salafism owes mainly to the supports, ideologically and financially, of the Gulf countries, particularly Arab Saudi, which have played as the major producers and exporters of Salafi publications, Salafi propagation, and humanitarian aids (Noorhaidi 2005, p.29-55;

2007, p. 85-93; Wiktorowics 2001, p. 20). Unlike other Islamic movements, Salafism is not organized within a particular Muslim organization as it does not operate under the leadership of a particular figure in a highly structured organization. The supporters of Salafism are not united by an organizational structure or directed by a particular leader or ideologue. Rather, they are united and consolidated most by the shared Salafis identity. By identity, I mean a system of beliefs, ideas, values and meanings that reflects moral, social and political interests and commitments of the Salafis and constitutes their ideology of how the world should work. As van Dijk (1998 cited in Noorhaidi 2005, p. 132) asserts, ideology “represents a group’s identity and interests, defines its collective cohesion and organizes joint action and interactions that optimally realizes the group’s goals”.

The Salafis believe that there is only one accurate religious truth, which was revealed by God, transmitted by the Prophet Muhammad and followed by the three first generations of Muslim community (the Salaf). Different interpretations of the religious truth are regarded as reprehensible innovations and deviations from the true Islam. This sense of certainty has led the Salafis not to compromise and bridge differences with a number of Islamic sects or groups that are considered deviants such as Sufis. It is this consistency with the authentic Islam that has attracted followers to join the Salafī movement and helped it spread rapidly across the national borders. Salafism has become a forceful Islamic missionary movement without adopting ideas from other movements or groups, which is committed to establish a transnational community of true believers who are committed to the true Islam (Wiktorowicz 2001, p. 21).

Moreover, the Salafis believe that legacy of the Prophet and the Salaf is normative and universalistic in nature, which is to be strictly followed and imitated by subsequent generations of Muslims in a “contextual vacuum across the space and time” (Duderija 2007, p. 347). The methodological basis of Salafism is characterized by the commitment to return to the pure Islam, which was believed as to be only materialized in the times of the Prophet and the first three generations of Muslim. Hence, the Salafī movement is founded “on a romanticized and utopian view of the past, ignoring or demonizing the balance of Islamic history” and rejecting the legacy of the long established juristic schools of thought (*madhhab*) (El-Fadl 2003 cited in Duderija 2007, p. 348).

According to Mansoor (2000 cited in Duderija 2007, p. 351), the Salafis consider tradition a perfect guidance that provides answers to all present and future problems. Religious texts (*nash*) should not be understood through reality as they are seen to precede

and thus guide the latter. Rather, reality should be understood through the textual sources, though it might contribute to the formation of the latter. Likewise, the past, namely the prophetic time, should precede and should not be understood through the present. Rather, the prophetic time must be used as guidance for the present realities. Therefore, the authenticity of one's identity is determined by his degree of returning to the tradition and historical time of the Prophet and the early Muslim communities (Duderija 2007, p. 352). This reductionist view seems very interesting to Muslim masses because it is seen to constitute an authenticity and legitimacy of the Salafi ideology.

Nevertheless, Salafism is not inherently anti-modern movement. It actually tries "to reconcile the realities of modernity and the era of post-colonial emerging Arab nationalism with Islamic tradition by reading the values of modernism into the original sources of Islam" (Duderija 2007, p. 349). As Tibi (2002 cited in Duderija 2007, p. 349) says, Salafism attempts to "espouse cultural and institutional modernity by seeking a synthesis between these concepts and Islam, but doing so without rethinking the traditional Islamic theocentric worldview". Thus, Salafism is neither a movement that separate itself from nor unwilling to involve with modernity. This can be exemplified by their adoption of the global modern information technology like the internet for their religious purpose as will be elaborated in the next chapter.

B. The Salafi ideology

1. Return to the Qur'an and the Sunna

Like other Islamic reform movements, Salafism attempts to define Islam closely and explicitly in accordance with the Allah's revelation and the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad. The Salafis have a strong belief in the position of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the only valid sources of Islamic knowledge and practices. They believe that contemporary Muslims have failed to live on the true Islam as seen in their involvement in various forms of polytheism (*syirk*), reprehensible innovations (*bid'ah*), and superstitions (*khurafat*). According to them, fragmentations, conflicts, political and economic instability facing the Muslim countries resulted from their negligence and deviation from the true paths of Islam. Hence, they call for a return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah as a crucial solution to crisis and problems which are currently experienced by countries of the Muslim world.

What distinguishes Salafism from other Islamic fundamentalist movements is that it believes that the true way of going back to the Qur'an and the Sunnah is following closely

and explicitly the ways of understanding and practices set by al Salaf al-Salih (the pious predecessors). They call this *manhaj al-salaf* (the method of the Salaf). This method of returning to the authentic Islam is based on their belief that the Salaf is the best generations of Muslim community who understood and implemented Islam under direct guidance of the Prophet so that they constitute as the perfect models for the following Muslim generations. For the Salafis, to follow the Salaf means to follow the true Islam and to protect Muslims from mistakes, sins and evil acts (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 134).

This manifests in the Salafi rejection of the application of human intellect or logic to uncover messages of religious texts as practiced by the Salaf. For the Salafis, the Qur'an and the Sunnah are self-explanatory for those who have adequate trainings in Islamic knowledge and the explanation of their messages had been accomplished by the Prophet and the Salaf. Any attempt to interpret religious texts by using methods of reasoning will open a way to human desires and distort God's truth. This anti-intellectualist approach to religious texts is best exemplified by the Salafis' understanding of the God's names and attributes, such as the Sovereign (*al-Malik*) and the Proud (*al-Mutakabbir*). They emphasize that Muslims must accept references to the names and attributes of Allah in their literal meanings as one of the main component of *tawhid* without applying human faculties to gain comprehension and specification of how the God's names and attributes are, or *bi la kayf* (literally means 'without how') in the Salafi lexicon (Wiktorowicz 2006, p. 210).

Furthermore, the Salafis emphasize the importance of reviving the Sunnah. The position of the Sunnah as a source of Islamic knowledge and authority is central in Islamic orthodoxy, second to the Qur'an. The Salafis believe that the Sunnah has been neglected by Muslims of the contemporary world so that it is crucial for Muslims to revive it in order to return to the authentic Islam. They are committed to practice and internalize the authentic Sunnah in their everyday lives so that they call themselves *ahl al-sunnah* (the followers of the prophetic tradition) and claim to belong to *al-firqa al-najiyah* (the saved sect) or *al-taifa al-mansurah* (the assisted group) (Noorhaidi 2005 p. 134). The Salafis' insistence on following the Sunnah as the only true method of returning to the pure Islam brought them to claim that their mission (*da'wa*) is the only true Islamic mission because it is founded on three main goals: "to establish the prominence of the Sunnah of the prophet; to provide a direct example for society; and to advocate the purity of *tawhid* (the oneness of God)". Hence, they stigmatize the *da'wa* of other Islamic movements and call it the satanic mission (*da'wa al-*

syaithan) as it is perceived to being occupied by political issues and un-Islamic thoughts and practices (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 135).

In their attempts to preserve the Sunnah, the Salafis strongly oppose what they call *bid'ah*, any belief, action and innovation that are not enjoined by the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad. They believe that *bid'ah* resulted from the adoption of local cultures by the Islamic missionaries in their attempts to attract new converts. This blend of Islam and customs helped significantly the conversion process to Islam by making Islam accessible to wider audiences. But, the Salafis point out that this syncretism has become a major source of reprehensible innovations, beliefs and practices so that it threatens the purity of Islamic teachings (Wiktorowicz 2006, p. 209). In this context, they see culture as the enemy of authentic Islam and their purification of Muslim beliefs and practices represents the example of what Olivier Roy (2004 cited in Wiktorowicz 2006, p. 210) calls "deculturation"; it is a process in which the Salafis seek to return to the pristine Islam by throwing away local customs and disconnecting Islam from any local context.

2. *Tawhid*

At the very core of the Salafi identities lies the doctrine of *tawhid*, the oneness of God. The Salafis believe that *tawhid* includes the unity of worship (*tawhid 'ubudiyyah*), the unity of lordship (*tawhid uluhiyyah*) and the unity of Allah's names and attributes (*tawhid al-asma wa al-shifat*). It involves a total submission to God in all aspect of human life. For the Salafis, to be a true servant of Allah, a Muslim must single out Him in all acts of worship and serve Him with complete loyalty. A faithful Muslim must believe that Allah is the Creator of all things and He is the one who has sovereignty over them. In addition, a true servant of Allah must accept that Allah has names and attributes as mentioned in the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah in their literal meanings without turning to the human logic to interpret them as metaphors or likening them to the attributes of His creations (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 135).

Actually, the Salafi movement is not the sole fundamentalist Islamic movement that advocates the central position of *tawhid* in its ideological structure. Jamaat Islami of Pakistan³ and Ikhwan al-Muslamin⁴ also place a very special position to the doctrine of

³ Jamaat-i- Islami is the most influential Islamic revivalist movement in Pakistan and established in Lahore in 1941 by Abul Ala al-Mawdudi (1903-1979). It developed as an Islamic party whose ideology is based on the modern revolutionary conception of Islam in the contemporary world. For details of this movement, see e.g. F. Grare (2002), *Political Islam in the Indian Subcontinent: the Jamaat-i-Islami*, Manohar, New Delhi; M. Ahmad

tawhid as the ideological basis of their movements. Abul A'la al-Mawdudi, the ideologue of the Jamaat-i- Islami, viewed that *tawhid* is the sole objective of the Islamic faith and a true Muslim is someone who not only abides by the Islamic teachings, but also practices a total obedience and submission to God. For him, submission to God requires the total implementation of Islamic teachings in all aspects of life and constitutes a precondition for establishing an ideal Islamic society (Nasr 1996 cited in Noorhaidi 2005, p. 136).

The position of *tawhid* as a very core of Islamic fundamentalism is echoed by Sayyid Qutb, the ideologue of Ikhwan al-Muslimin. According to him, the acceptance of *tawhid* must be reflected in the total submission to Allah and in the recognition of the comprehensiveness of Islam. This constitutes the negation of any rule and system of life made by human beings as Allah is the only creator, the only ruler and the only legislator of human life. All norms, legislations, and systems of life must be derived solely from Him. This belief brought Qutb to claim that individuals who use man-made regulations as their guide and way of life or rulers who regulate their countries in accordance with the systems derived from a king (monarchy) or a people (democracy) can be declared as unbelievers (*kafir*; plural: *kuffar* or *kafirin*) for they do not follow the divine religion, but rather the man-made religion (Moussalli 1992 cited in Noorhaidi 2005, p. 137).

It appears that the political meaning of *tawhid* is highly emphasized by Mawdudi and Qutb. It is this point that distinguishes the Salafi movements from other fundamentalist movements, at least from the two abovementioned movements. The Salafis refute the political element of *tawhid* because they believe that such understanding is a heresy and a forbidden innovation (*bid'ah*), which has no example from al-Salaf al-Salih and was fabricated by the fanatics (*hizbiyyin*) for their own political interests. Due to this, the Salafis consider Islamic groups who are inclined to politics such as Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Hizbut Tahrir⁵ as the deviant groups that have gone astray from the true Islam. This is reflected in

(1991) 'Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat' in Marty & Appleby, *Fundamentalism observed*.

⁴ Ikhwan al-Muslimin (the Muslim Brotherhood) is a transnational religio-political organization founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna. Like other Islamic fundamentalist movements, it advocates a return to the Qur'an and the Hadith as guidelines to establish an Islamic society.

⁵ Hizb ut-Tahrir is a transnational political party whose ideology is Islam. It was founded by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani in 1953 in Palestine. See e.g. Taji-Farouki (2000); Karagiannis & McCauley (2006); Karagiannis (2006).

the Salafis' attacks on such groups as will be seen in their cyberwar against such enemies in the next chapter.

3. *Al-wala' wa al-bara'*

The Salafis believe in the doctrine of *al-wala' wa al-bara'*. Literally, the Arabic *al-wala'* means "love, support, help, or alliance" and *al-bara'* means "running away, denouncement, abandonment, or dissociation". It is a doctrine that a Muslim must totally love, support, defend, and build alliance with Islam and other fellow Muslims and at the same time he or she must denounce, desert, and dissociate from infidels or those regarded as the enemies of Islam. The doctrine constitutes a clear-cut distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, between the world of believers and that of unbelievers, even between the Salafis and non-Salafis. It requires association with Islam and Muslims and dissociation with other religions and non-Islamic communities.

To maintain this doctrine, the Salafis opt to live in a small tight-knit community. They view that this seclusion is a way to protect themselves from un-Islamic behaviours and thoughts and to reinforce their cohesion in the face of enemies. But, the community system developed by the Salafis is different from the one advocated by other Islamic movements, such as Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Hizbut Tahrir, which require the committed individuals to build highly structured cells as a basis community for the establishment of an Islamic state. The Salafis's concern with the secluded community system is rather related with their attempts to protect Islam and themselves from any forms of reprehensible innovations and live a life in accordance with the methods of the Salaf (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 142).

Another way the Salafis follow to abide by the doctrine *al-wala' wa al-bara'* is following a specific codes of dress and conduct. They are committed to wear particular Arabic clothing which is believed as the Islamic dress code. Male Salafis wear a long white shirt, baggy trousers right to their calves, and a headgear (a turban or a white cap). They grow their beards, but shave their moustaches. Female Salafis opt to wear long baggy black dresses and veils to cover their faces. Their social interactions are restricted in that they are secluded from men and only allowed to go outside their houses or to have contact with men in the companion of their husbands or *mahrims*, the close relatives with whom they are forbidden to marry (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 142). The Salafis are convinced that these are Islamic practices which were set by the Salaf to associate themselves with Islamic way of life and to dissociate themselves from non-Muslims and their ways of life. Imitating non-Muslims such

as in the ways they dress and have social relationship is considered a violation of the doctrine *al-wala' wa al-bara'*.

4. Apolitical stance: *hizbiyyah* and *tawhid hakimiyyah*

The Salafis' commitment to preserve the purity of Islam as practiced by the Salaf has led them to refrain from political tendency and political activities. In doing so, they strongly reject what they call *hizbiyyah* (partisan politics; fanaticism to a group or leader), which is allegedly advocated by some Islamic movements such as Ikhwan al-Muslimin. According to the Salafis, *hizbiyyah* has led the Islamic groups to give priority to politics over the purification of Muslim beliefs and practices from reprehensible innovations. They call the mission propagated by Ikhwan al-Muslimin the *da'wa hizbiyyah* because it calls their members for fanaticism to their group and leaders, rather than to the authentic Islam as practiced by the Salaf. The political agenda has occupied the members of this movement so that they abandon the more essential mission, namely a call for the pure Islam of the Salaf. Here, they attempt to emphasize that they are the only legitimate group who are committed to the legitimate Islamic propagation (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 144).

Apolitical stance and a non-revolutionary nature of the Salafi movement can also be seen in its rejection of the so-called *tawhid hakimiyyah*. Developed by the ideologues of political Islam such as Abul A'la al-Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb, it is a doctrine which is believed as one of the main components of the *tawhid* saying that governance and sovereignty belong and can be ascribed only to Allah because He is the only Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 146). It implies that He is the only one who has authority to regulate and rule the human being and other creatures. Hence, Muslims who do not follow the God's law and rulers who do not rule in accordance with His law oppose against the God's sovereignty and consequently can be declared as unbelievers.

The Salafis reject the conviction *hakimiyyah* (sovereignty) as one of the main elements of *tawhid*. Rather, they regard the doctrine as a form of forbidden innovations (*bid'ah*). Moreover, they are convinced that it is developed by the *hizbiyyah* groups as a political weapon to legitimate and promote *takfir*, a doctrine of the necessary of revolts against the legitimate Muslim rulers who do not follow the God's law. The Salafis call those who support this doctrine neo-Kharijites (Khawarij),⁶ a deviant sect in the early Islam who

⁶ Khawarij (Kharijites) first emerged in the late 7th century AD, concentrated in today's southern Iraq, and are distinct from the Sunnis and Shiites. Khawarij believe in the doctrine of *takfir* that it is necessary to revolt

declared Muslims who, they thought, did not follow the God's law as unbelievers (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 147).

From the point of view of the Salafis, political Islam as seen in the idea of the establishment of Islamic state promoted by Iqwan al-Muslmin and Hizbut Tahrir is contradictory with the prophetic tradition of Islamic propagation because the Prophet Muhammad gave priority to educating people with *tawhid* over gaining a political power. It is dangerous to the purity of Islamic mission because it will lead Muslims to focus their minds and energies on political activities, but neglect the purification of beliefs and practices from forbidden innovations and teaching society the true Islam.

Furthermore, the Salafis view that the political Islam has a potential to bring Muslim countries into conflicts, fragmentations and disorders. It will likely spread a revolutionary spirit among Muslims in that it will encourage them to rebel against the ruler in order to seize power. For them, any attempt to topple the legitimate ruler will result in nothing but failure, bloodshed and socio-political disorder. They point to some examples of catastrophes resulting from the spread of the revolutionary spirit such as the rebellion by the jihad group that were involved in the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in the early 1980s, the opposition launched by Muhammad ibn Surur and Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq against the Saudi Arabian royal family and its religious establishment, and the victory of FIS in Algeria in the early 1990s (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 145).

The Salafis believe that in fact, political Islam does not bring Muslims closer to the true Islam, but rather takes them away from the *manhaj al-salaf* as seen in the adoption of the unbelievers' political systems by some Islamist movements. Some Islamist movements set up political parties and participate in the elections in their attempts to take over power and establish an Islamic state. For example, Ikhwan al-Muslmin of Indonesia and other politico-Islamist movements established Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), which gained 4% of total vote in 2004 general election. For the Salafis, this is a reprehensible innovation (*bid'ah*) which has no precedence in the Salaf practice and a forbidden imitation of the unbelievers. They accuse the Islamist movements who use politics as a vehicle to implement *shari'ah* of politicising Islam for personal or groups' interests, not Islamic interests and purposes. Hence, the Salafis are not enthusiastic with the establishment of Islamic caliphate as promoted by

against any ruler who deviates from the example of the Prophet Muhammad and the first two Caliphs (Abu Bakr and Umar bin Khattab). See e.g. J.J. Saunders (1977) *A History of Medieval Islam*, Routledge, London.

politico-Islamist movements such Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Hizbut Tahrir. For them, Islamic caliphate is not the ultimate goal of Islamic mission, but rather as a reward and promise given by God to those who maintain the purity of Islamic beliefs and practices, preserve the oneness of God and revive the Sunnah (Noorhaidi 2005, 145).

C. Contemporary development of the Salafi movement in Indonesia

1. Early development

Contrary to the assumption of some observers, Salafism is not alien to Indonesian Islam. In fact, its presence can be traced back to the Padri movement in Sumatera from at the early 1800s. The movement began with three leaders who returned from Mecca, which was occupied by the Wahhabi movement in 1801, to propagate the Wahhabi teachings of purification of Islam from *bid'ah* (religious innovations) and strict interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah. They ordered men to grow their beards and wear turbans, and women to cover their faces. They even attacked villages whose inhabitants rejected their new teachings. But, the movement began to ease in 1820s as the resistance from the old social order intensified and, more importantly, when pilgrims returned from Mecca reporting that the Wahhabi movement had declined in its country of birth as the newly born Saudi Arabian state was crushed in 1819 by the Egyptian of Ottoman army (Dobbin 1983 cited in ICG 2004, p. 5; Noorhaidi 2005, p. 29).

In contemporary Indonesia, the modern Salafi movement can be traced back to its presence in the mid 1980s. The movement could be identified by signs such as the appearance of young men wearing the traditional Arabic dress of flowing robes, turbans or white headgears, trousers above their ankle, and growing beards, and young women wearing a long flowing black dress and veil. These Salafis were inclined to live separately from the majority by organizing themselves into small cells or tight-knit communities. They were determined to establish an alternative model of community, which was different from the one around them or the Western model of society, by reviving and following literally traditions developed by the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim generations (*al-salaf a-salih*) as their attempt to return to a pristine and ideal Islam. To reach this goal, these Salafis were committed to *da'wa* (propagation) activities to Islamize the Muslim society and educate them about the true Islam by establishing *halqa* (study circles) and *dawra* (religious trainings). They believed that the idealized *ummah* (Muslim community) with *shari'a* as the only legitimate law can be realized through evolutionary processes that involve *tarbiyya*

(education) about the true Islam and *tasfiyya* (purification) from any behaviours and ideas considered un-Islamic (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 23-24).

2. *The Saudi factor*

Like its presence in other countries, the coming of the Salafi movement to Indonesia cannot be separated from the influence of Saudi Arabia in the global politics of Muslim world. Saudi Arabia has been determined to disseminate the Salafi thoughts outside the Arabian Peninsula and spread its cultural and political influences over the Muslim world. This ambition was encouraged by religious and political motives. Having encouraged by its position as the guardian of two holy sanctuaries, al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina, the kingdom has been constantly obsessed by ambition to be a centre of the Muslim world. In doing so, the kingdom under the leadership of Abd al-'Aziz ibn Saud organized the Muslim World Congress in the 1920s which aimed to establish solidarity among Muslim countries after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This was followed by its sponsorship of the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Conference in 1957 and the Rabita al-'Alam al-Islami (The Muslim World League) in 1962, which aimed to strengthen the Saudi influence in the cultural and religious life of Muslims across the world (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 30). The skyrocketing of the world oil price had a crucial contribution to the kingdom's ambition in that it provided considerable economic benefits for the kingdom in the form of petrodollars to fund its spread of Salafism (Fraser 1997 cited in Noorhaidi 2005, p. 30).

After World War II, Saudi Arabia adopted a policy of propagating Salafism as one of its major foreign policies. Politically, it was aimed as a counter attack to the expansion of Arab Socialist Movement led by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, which eventually brought the kingdom to the Western bloc led by the United States that were involved in the Cold War with the Soviet Union-led communist bloc (Kepel 2002 cited in Noorhaidi 2005, p. 30). In addition, the global Salafi dissemination was a political reaction to the eruption of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 that brought Ayatullah Khomeini to power. For Saudi Arabia, the Iranian Revolution was a threat to the existence of the kingdom in the Muslim world as it provided a model for the establishment of an Islamic State that long been dreamed of by political Islamists. Saudi Arabia feared that such a revolution would spread its influence to other Muslim countries and put its own monarchy to an end. In response to the Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia was determined to contain the shocking effect of the revolution by

undertaking the following measures: at the domestic level, it attempted to prove that the kingdom was committed to Islam by enforcing strict Islamic law; and, at the international level, it intensified its commitment to disseminate Salafism to the Muslim world and include in its doctrines anti-Shiite⁷ and anti-revolutionary elements (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 31).

3. Contemporary development

In Indonesia, Salafism spreads mainly through the Middle Eastern graduates, particularly those who finished their studies in Saudi Arabian and Yemen universities.⁸ This marked the emergence of a new Salafi generation in Indonesia (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 44). Having finished their studies in these countries, they became determined to propagate the Salafi thoughts in their homelands in a systematic way. Upon their return to Indonesia, they believed that Indonesian Muslims were in need of understanding the true Islam and accused the established Muslim organizations of losing the spirit of pure Islam as practiced by the Prophet and his companions, having a tendency towards rationalization, and ignoring the interests of the *ummah* (Muslim community). Among them were Chamsaha Sofwan alias Abu Nida, Ahmad Faiz Asifuddin, and Aunur Rafiq Ghuftron, who were assigned to teach at some *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools), including the pesantren al-Mukmin, Ngruki, Jawa Tengah (Central Java) (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 45).

They began their activities by disseminating Salafism among the university students. It was Chamsaha Sofwan alias Abu Nida who took an initiative to propagate the Salafi movement among the university students. With the support from Saefullah Mahyuddin, the head of DDII (Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation) branch of Yogyakarta, Abu Nida started to promote the Salafi ideas by giving lectures at the Jama'ah Shalahudin,⁹ a Muslim student community which was attached to the Gajah Mada University, and organizing *halqa* (study circles) and *dawrah* (religious trainings) at mosques located in some universities and

⁷ Syi'ah (Shiites) is the second denomination in Islam after Sunni Muslims. Unlike Sunni Muslims, Syi'ah (literally: sect) believe that the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) and their descendants have special spiritual and political rule over the Muslim community. Thus, they consider Ali ibn Abi Thalib, the Prophet's cousin and husband of his daughter Fatimah was the true successor of the Prophet (Khalifah; Caliph), not the first three of Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar ibn Khattab and Usman ibn Affan). For details, see e.g. Momen (1985); Wollaston (2005).

⁸ Other channels that helped the dissemination of Salafism in Indonesia include Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII, Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation) and Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab (LIPIA, the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic). See Noorhaidi 2005, p. 32-48; 2007, p. 87-90).

⁹ On the role that Jamaah Shalahudin plays in the dissemination of Islam among university students, see e.g. Karim (2006).

high schools in Yogyakarta (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 46). In the early 1990s, the arrival of other Middle Eastern graduates reinforced the campus da'wa activities, which was initiated by Abu Nida. They were Ja'far Umar Thalib, Yazid Abdul Qadir Jawwas and Yusuf Usman Baisa who were assigned by LIPIA (the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic) to teach at the Pesantren al-Irsyad, Solo, Central Java. These graduates promoted the Salafi thoughts by organizing da'wa activities at Diponegoro University, State University of 11th March, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, and also Gadjah Mada University (Noorhaidi 2005, p.47).

The efforts by these first Middle Eastern graduates proved fruitful as the Salafi communities, in which the university students constitute the main members, began to flourish in Yogyakarta and Central Java. When other Saudi Arabian graduates returned to Indonesia, the Salafi *da'wa* activities spread to universities in other cities in Java such as Semarang, Cirebon, Bandung, Jakarta, and to the outer Java such as Makassar. As result, a number of Salafi communities grew significantly in these cities in which they organized a systematic way of the Salafi propagation (Noorhaidi 2005, 48).

To accelerate the Salafi propagation and reinforce the existence of Salafi communities, the Saudi Arabian graduates established the Salafi foundations with the financial supports from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Through the financial support from Saudi-associated al-Mu'assasat al-Haramayn al-Khayriyya (the Two Holy Sanctuaries Charitable Foundation) and Kuwait-based al-Jam'iyya Ihya al-Turath al-Islami (the Society of Reviving Islamic Heritage), they established As-Sunnah Foundation and Majlis al-Turats al-Islami and the Islamic Centre Bin Baz in Yogyakarta. In Jakarta, the Salafi proponents founded Al-Sofwah Foundation and Lajnah al-Khairiyyah al-Musyarakah (the Coopearative Committee for Islamic Charity). In West Java, they established As-Sunnah Foundation (Cirebon) with financial support from Al-Sofwa Foundation of Jakarta, Al-Huda (Bogor) and Nidaus Sunnah (Karawang). In Sulawesi, M. Zaitun Rasmin, graduated from Islamic University of Medina, established the Wahdah Islamiyyah Foundation (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 50-52). In addition, the Salafis disseminated the Salafi ideology through publications by publishing As-Sunnah, the first Salafi magazine in Indonesia, and establishing Pustaka Azzam, a publishing house of Salafi ideologies, in Jakarta (Noorhaidi 2005, p.48-49).

4. *Split of the Salafi movement*

The presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia as the kingdom's response to Gulf War incited by Saddam Hussein-led Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 resulted in the criticisms of the Saudi royal family. Responding to their criticisms, the Ha'iat Kibar al-'Ulama (the Committee of the Senior Religious Scholars), led by the main Salafi scholar 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz, issued a fatwa on the legitimate status of the presence of American soldiers on the Saudi Arabian soil (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 53).

Undoubtedly, the fatwa brought forth criticism from the new generation of Salafi scholars. In Saudi Arabia, Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awdah, both the proponents of Salafi politico organization of Ikhwan al-Muslimin and had exercised influences in several universities, considered the fatwa as a proof of the cooptation of the committee by the interests of the kingdom. Together with Muhammad ibn Surur, they also accused the senior ulama of being slaves of the United States of America. In Kuwait, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Khaliq, who graduated from the Medina Islamic University, condemned the members of the committee and accused them of having no knowledge of Islam and collaborating with the Saudi regime. A similar criticism was echoed by Afghan war veterans. Led by Osama bin Laden, they condemned the Saudi policy on the invitation of American troops and asked the Saudi religious authorities to launch a fatwa against non-Muslims's presence in the Muslim country. This criticism marked the emergence of the Salafi Jihadi that calls for a global jihad against 'un-Islamic' regimes in the Muslim countries including the Saudi authorities and infidel oppression of the Muslims by "Jewish-cum-Crusader" led by the United States (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 54-55).

The abovementioned conflict between the Salafi authorities indubitably resulted in a split of the Salafi movement in the Middle East. This can be seen in the fact that the Salafi protagonists are divided into two divisions: the purist and the politico Salafis (Wiktorowics 2006; ICG 2004). First, purist Salafis are mainly concerned with maintaining the purity of Islam as sketched in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the concensus of the Salaf. They believe that this can only be achieved by propagating the Salafi creed and waging war against reprehensible innovations, any forms of polytheism, human desires and reason. For them, the Salafi ideology can be realized by the methods of *da'wa* (propagation), *tarbiyya* (religious education and cultivation), and *tasfiyya* (purification from any forms of religious innovations) (Wiktorowics 2006, p. 217).

As a result, the purist Salafis believe that any political action has no legitimation until the religion is purified because it will lead to destruction as society does not comprehend the true tenets of Islam. They are of the opinion that any political activism such as criticism and rebellion against a ruler will likely lead to the devastating effects to the society and disruption of the Salafi *da'wa* activities. In regard to a ruler's policy, the purists would prefer to give advice rather than overt opposition, even if he is an unjust and oppressive ruler. This apolitical stance of the purist Salafi is based on their analogy of the contemporary political situations to the Meccan period of the Prophet Muhammad's mission. They assert that during this period, Muslims were a minority and vulnerable to the use of force by the dominant Quraisy tribe so that the methods of propagation and advice were used to spread the new faith. Overt political opposition would in that time, as the purists interpret, crush the Islamic propagation and jihad was understood as a peaceful struggle to disseminate Islam, not disruptions and disorders (Wiktorowics 2006, p. 217).

This conviction reflected in the abovementioned purist's fatwa for defending the Saudi authorities' policy on approving the presence of the US troops in the Saudi Arabian soil during the Gulf War in 1990. The basic line of their arguments was that any criticism and opposition against the incumbent ruler, no matter they were unjust and repressive, was not allowed as they would result in reprisals and destruction of Muslim community. For them, an action should not create a greater danger and disadvantages to the Salafi movement. In addition, they do not consider Salafism as a *harkat* (movement) as the term connotes a political meaning. Rather, they view themselves as the vanguard of the purity of *tawhid* and the protector of purity of Islam from corruptive influences and innovations (Wiktorowics 2006, p. 218).

Second, though they share the Salafi creed with the purists, politico Salafis adopt a different approach to the application of the creed into contemporary issues. They claim that they are better situated to implement the Salafi creed because they have a better understanding of contemporary issues (Wiktorowics 2006, p.221). For them, the purists have no adequate knowledge of contemporary problems so that they are mistaken in applying the Salafi principles into contemporary issues in the Muslim world. Undoubtedly, the rise of politico Salafis has challenged the Saudi purists' grip over Salafi community in the Muslim world.

The politico Salafis emerged from young salafi Scholars at Saudi universities during the 1980s. They were engaged in politicized Salafism as a result of their intense intellectual

contacts with a number of the members of Ikhwan al-Muslimin who escaped from Gamal Abdel Nasser's crackdown in Egypt in the 1960s. Unlike their senior Salafi authorities, they assert that they are committed to the Salafi creed, but expand their attempts to include issues beyond rituals and un-Islamic practices in the Muslim society. They feel they have a moral responsibility to be involved in contemporary Muslim problems by discussing and using politics as a vehicle for achieving the idealized *ummah* (Muslim society). Protecting the purity of *tawhid* (monotheism) is essential, but they believe this requires the involvement of political vehicle as well because without this the irreverent rulers can crush Islam and Muslim society (Wiktorowics 2006, p. 222).

Hence, they do not hesitate to criticise the incumbent rulers. This is seen in their condemnation of the Saudi decision to invite the US troops and the Saudi Salafi authorities for issuing a fatwa permitting the kingdom's policy. For the younger Salafi scholars, the fatwa reflects the purists' inadequate knowledge of the political world where they live. The purists did not understand well the context of a contemporary issue to which they were expected to apply the Salafi teachings. Safar al-Hawali and others believed that the Saudi kingdom and the purist Salafi scholars did not comprehend the true intention of the US troops' presence in the Saudi Arabian soil. For the politico Salafis, it was not the issue of seeking help (*isti'ana*) as the purists believed, rather the beginning of US strategy to dominate the Muslim world (Wiktorowics 2006, p. 223).

The insistence of the purist scholars on apolitical Salafism led some politico Salafis to call them with some pejorative epithets, which reflected their attention was mainly focused on rituals, such as "the scholars of trivialities" or "the scholar of toilet manners". Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq, the leader of al-Turas Foundation in Kuwait, considered the purist scholars as "mummified" and "those who live in the Middle Ages (Wiktorowics, p. 224, endnote 52).

In turn, the tension among the Salafi proponents in the Middle East was also felt and extended to Indonesia. In Indonesia, the purist Salafis are represented by Umar Sewed, Lukman Baabduh, Dzulqarnain Abdul Ghafur and members of the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah, disbanded in 2002, led by Jafar Umar Thalib (ICG 2004, p. 18). As their mentors in the Middle East, they considered their rivals who were inclined to politics as religious innovators for they compromised the Salafi principles with worldly interests as their attempt to develop their foundations and take money from the Middle Eastern donors. For example, Umar Sewed and others often brand their rivals with pejorative epithets such as

sururi (the followers of Ibn Surur), *hizbiy* (the fanatics to a group or tribe) and *ikhwani* (the supporters of Ikhwan al-Muslimin), that all refer to the politico-Salafists.

It was Jafar Umar Thalib who defined the dynamics of Salafism in Indonesia. He accused Abu Nida and Yusuf Baisa, who together with him initiated the Salafi movement at universities in Yogyakarta in the early 1990s, of being the adherents of the *takfiri* doctrine (declaring a ruler as apostate if he does not implement *sharia* and violence is allowed to topple him and replaced with a true Muslim) as put forward by the politico Salafis such as Sayyid Qutb of Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Muhammad ibn Surur. For Thalib, the doctrine was very dangerous for it could incite the revolutionary actions among Muslim society. It was unacceptable as it was a *bid'ah*, which had no model in the practice of the Prophet and *al-salaf al-salih*. For him and other purists, *da'wa* was the only legitimate form of politics. (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 78).

In response to Ja'far Thalib's attacks, the politico Salafis that rooted in Ikhwan al-Muslimin, Hizbut Tahrir, and NII movements argued that Ja'far Thalib's condemnation of their ideologue, Sayyid Qutb, were unacceptable. For them, there were no reasons for Jafar to claim that political inclination among the Salafis as *bid'ah*, *shirk*, and *hizbiyyah*. Later, this conflict led the Ikhwan al-Muslimin activists to forbid Ja'far's followers doing their activities in mosques located at the Gadjah Mada University of Yogyakarta (Noorhaidi 2005, p. 80).

It appears that the split among the supporters of Salafism in the Middle East was not in the Salafi creed because all Salafi factions share a common creed of going back to the Quran and Sunna and purifying Islam from all forms of innovations as set the Salaf. Rather, the division was derived from different *manhaj* (method) adopted to apply the Salafi creed to contemporary issues. Understanding the contemporary problems and analysing modern context are "the cornerstone of the politico critique and the fault line of the factional dispute with the purists"(Wiktorowics, p. 225).

The division among Salafi proponents in Indonesia exactly reflected a similar split in the Middle East. The conflict among Salafi activists in the country was a mirror as well as an extension of the one occurred among their references in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen. This became possible as they kept contact with their Salafi references in the Middle East for religious consultation, intellectual relationship, and financial support through email, telephone, fax, and students networks coming to or returning from the Salafi Middle East countries. The drift among Salafi scholars in the Middle East and its extension in Indonesia can be regarded as a competition over a position of who truly represents the true Salafi

movement. In Indonesia, as indicated by the case of Jafar Umar Thalib, the split reflected not only a struggle for a position of who holds the main authority among the Indonesian Salafis, but also a contest for maintaining financial support from donors in the Gulf countries. This, in turn, was also extended into cyberspace as seen in the internet use by the purist Salafis for waging a war against their rivals as will be explained in the next chapter.

Articulating identity: the Salafi use of the Internet in Indonesia

Religious fundamentalism refers to an ultra-conservative approach to the religious texts to maintain their pristine meanings and to avoid the pragmatic compromises with modernity. In this sense, religious fundamentalist communities are highly disciplined in that their behaviours are regulated by religious texts and live separately from the mainstream community in order to preserve the original meaning of religious texts “with as few adaptations to modernity as possible” (Barzilai 2003 cited in Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005). It is also characterised by tight hierarchy which involves subordination of members of community to elite religious authority who are regarded as to have legitimacy and charisma given by divine authority (Weber 1964; Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005). The charismatic elites of fundamentalist community consolidate legitimacy and generate obedience by, among others, controlling the flow of information. Knowledge is communicated vertically and funnelled from the elites to the members of community as the subordinates (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005).

However, evidence shows that religious fundamentalism is not anti modernity movement. Global forces such as the internet bring a threat to the seclusive and highly hierarchical structure of religious fundamentalist community. But, at the same time the internet provides opportunities for the fundamentalist community. As they cannot escape from the global wave of technological information and ignore the presence of the internet, the religious fundamentalist community adopt the global media and adapt it to their purposes and interests.

Studies show the rise of the religious presence on cyberspace. Religious communities, even the most orthodox ones, use the internet for various purposes such as information exchange, propagation, discussion, virtual prayers, cyber-pilgrimages, fundraising, and social engagement with fellow members as well as outsiders (Dawson 2000, 2001, 2004; Dawson and Cowan 2004; Hojsgaard and Warburg 2004). This was echoed by a survey undertaken by the Pew Internet and American Life Project. It is reported that most of the congregational respondents said the elites of religious community “are eager to use their websites to increase their presence and visibility in their local communities and explain their beliefs” (Larsen 2000). All this shows that the internet has served the religious communities well as a tool of

personalization and contextualization. Religious community, particularly the elites, utilise the internet to establish their presence in cyberspace by localising this new global media for their specific purposes and interests.

It has been argued that the internet is a medium of possibility by which an individual can express identities beyond his or her social reality (Turkle 1996; Hjarvard 2002 cited in Khatib 2003, p. 395). The internet as new media has created what Rheingold (2000) calls “virtual community”, whose members interact and communicate transcending physical limitations and national borders. However, this does not mean that cyberspace is detached completely from social realities or a substitute for realities of the world (Shohat 1999 cited in Khatib 2003, p. 395). Instead of replacing the real world relations, the internet has become another space, not a substitute space, for human relationships. It is a new space in which local and global relations are extended beyond their physical boundaries and brought in to the virtual world. The internet is another zone in which conflicts and tensions are carried out and closely attached to “the corporality of its users” (Khatib 2003).

This chapter will analyse localization and appropriation processes of the internet by fundamentalist community by focusing on the purist Salafi community and its use of the internet as expressed in its website, www.salafy.or.id, in the local (Indonesia) and global contexts. It examines the various ways the Salafi community uses the internet in its attempts to articulate its local and global identities. This covers ideological, polemical, contextual and communicative uses of the Salafi’s website as well as the community’s use of the internet as a medium to respond to contemporary issues.

A. About the website

The website www.salafy.or.id belongs to the purist Salafi community of Indonesian branch. It is run by supporters of the purist Salafism in their attempts to promote their particular Salafi ideology. This can be seen in the board of supervisors and contributors that come from the authorities of Indonesian branch of purist Salafism such as Muhammad Umar As-Sewed and Luqman Baabduh. The website also extensively posts the writings by the authorities of purist Salafism in Middle East such as Ibn Baz of Saudi Arabia and Rabi al-Madkhali of Yemen and its local contributors largely make them the main references for their articles. All this is consistent with a report by International Crisis Group (2004) and a study by Noorhaidi (2005; 2007) that the purist Salafis of Indonesian branch established www.salafy.o.id as their own website. The significance of the website in the context of this

study lies in the fact it has served as evidence that even the ultra-conservative Islamic fundamentalist groups appropriate the internet as a symbol of modern-profane worldview so that it is not sufficient to label them as anti-modern.

The website was designed as a mainly text-based and easy-to-use website with light green (believed to be a representative colour of Islam) as its background colour. Its homepage displays a title of the website ‘Salafy Online Situs Salafi Ahlussunah wal Jamaah’ (Salafy Online, the website of the followers of Sunnah and Community), the term “As-Salafy” written in Roman and Arabic scripts, and a subtitle “Meniti jejak al-salaf al-salih” (Following the footsteps of the Pious Forefathers). Using Indonesian as the main language, the website appears in the following main structure: First, main menu containing sections “Home”, “Tentang Kami” (About Us), “Mengapa Harus Salafy” (Why Should be Salafy), “Info Kajian Salafy” (Information about Salafy Studies), “Arabic Tool”, “Download Centre”, “Forum Kita (Our Forum), “Free Webmail”, and “Kontak Kami” (Contact Us). Second, articles categorized as “Aqidah” (faith), “Manhaj” (method), “Fiqh” (Islamic jurisprudence), “Fatwa-fatwa” (*fatwas*; religious opinions), and “Info Dakwah” (Information about Islamic mission). Lastly, links and affiliations that connect the Salafi website to other local and global Salafi websites.

The articles posted on the website are written in Indonesian by Indonesian purist Salafi figures such as Umar Sewed, Luqman Baabduh, and Abu Hamzah with references to the global Salafi authorities in the Middle East. The website also includes the translated writings and fatwas by Middle Eastern Salafi authorities such as Muhammad Nashirudin al-Albani, Rabi al-Madkhali, Abdullah bin Baz, Syaikh Utsaimin, Muqbil al-Wadi’i, and Fauzan Salih.

B. Communicating Salafi identities: an ideological use of the internet

There is no doubt that the Salafi community use the internet as a medium for promoting their Salafi identities. The website’s statement reveals that the Salafi community regard the internet as a medium of *dakwah Salaf* (Salafi mission) aimed at propagating and communicating the Salafi identities (see “Tentang Kami” section). This ideological use of the internet can be seen in the utilization of website by the Salafis to post articles and *fatwas* regarding principles of Salafism, dress code and behaviour, jihad, and politics.

1. Manhaj Salaf

The Salafis communicate their Salafi principles by posting articles written by Indonesian Salafis, with the extensive reference to the Middle Eastern Salafi ideologues, and writings by the Middle Eastern Salafi authorities translated into Indonesian. The postings deal with the *manhaj al-salaf al-salih* (the method of the righteous predecessors), which is believed as the only right way to understand and implement Islamic teachings. It is believed as the best way of understanding and practicing Islam because they were exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, his companions (*sahabat*), those who followed them (*tabi'in*), and a generation after who followed them (*tabi al-tabi'in*). They were the predecessors (*salaf*, singular; *aslaf*, plural), the early generations of Muslims, that were believed to have the best methods in understanding and practicing Islam under the direct guidance of the Prophet.

In their postings, the Salafis assert that their mission is *da'wah salafiyah* (Salafi propagation) on which their understanding and practices of Islam are based and to which they call other Muslims. This conviction is based on religious texts, the Qur'anic verses and the Sunnah, that are regarded as to say about the early generations of Muslim as the perfect models of understanding and observing Islam. The most refereed texts include the Quranic verse saying that "Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah" (Surah Alu Imran: 110) and the Sunnah narrated by Bukhary and Muslim that the prophet Muhammad said "The best people are my generation, then a generation after, and then a generation after". Therefore, the Salafis believe that they are the saved among various Muslim groups based on their understanding of the Sunnah says "The Jews split up into seventy one sects and the Christians split up into seventy two sects. My people will split up into seventy three sects which all of them are in the Fire, except one in Paradise. It was asked: "Who is that?" he replied: "That which I and my companions are upon" (see 'The essence of the Salafi mission';¹⁰ 'The method of the forefathers'¹¹).

Like most Muslims, the Salafis emphasize that the very core of their mission is a call for *tawhid* (monotheism; the oneness of God) and avoidance of *shirk* (polytheism), the main messages of all prophets. They highly emphasize the importance of *tawhid* in Islamic faith and the danger of *shirk* (see 'the place and urgency of *tawhid* in Islam';¹² 'Beware of *shirk*';¹³

¹⁰ Original title: 'Hakikat dakwah Salafiyah' (Indonesian).

¹¹ Original title: 'Manhaj Salaf'.

¹² Original title: 'Kedudukan tauhid dalam Islam dan urgensinya'.

‘About *tawhid*’¹⁴). But, what distinguishes them from the Muslim majority is their particular strict ways in understanding and practicing the doctrine of *tawhid* in that they attempt robustly to purify in belief and practice the doctrine from all forms of un-Islamic innovations and influences. They believe that the prophet Muhammad began and finished his mission with the *tawhid* doctrine (see ‘Monotheism, the mission of all prophets’¹⁵).

In a posted article, the Salafis elaborate the method of Salafism that involves two steps. First, *tashfiyyah* that refers to purification Islam from *bid’ah* (innovations). This step encompasses the movement of purifying Islam from all forms of beliefs, thoughts, and practices that have no basis in the religious texts and no precedence in the practice of the prophet and the early Muslim generations. Second step is *tarbiyyah* that involves education of the pure Islam for Muslims. This aims to educate Muslims with the pure Islam and cultivate them to live their lives with the true Islam (see ‘The method of the Salafi mission’¹⁶).

By posting articles in their website, the Salafis attempt to promote the idea of *al-wala wal bara*, another important element of their ideology. *Al-wala* (loyalty; love) means that a Muslim must love, help, and defend the people of *tawhid* (true monotheism) and *al-bara* means that he must despise, denounce and desert the people of *shirk* (associating God with others). This doctrine requires the clear-cut distinction between Muslims and non-Muslim, between the world of believers and that of unbelievers. For the Salafis, the doctrine includes a prohibition for Muslims to imitate non-Muslims’s traditions and ways of life such as clothing. They believe that the *al-wala wal bara* doctrine has basis in the religious texts (e.g. the Qur’an, surah al-Mumtahanah: 1, 4; al-Maidah:51; al-Tawbah: 23; al-Mujadilah: 22) and was practiced by Abraham, the father of monotheistic religions, and Muhammad. But, it seems that the application of *al-wala wal-bara* is confined to those who follow or defy the methods of the Salaf as the perceived by the Salafis (see ‘*al-wala wal-bara* is a must’;¹⁷ ‘Loyalty and enmity that are required by *shariah* 1-5’¹⁸).

2. Dress code, beards and men-women relationship

¹³ Original title: ‘Awat, bahaya syirik merenggut anda’.

¹⁴ Original title: ‘Jenis-jenis tauhid’.

¹⁵ Original title: ‘Dakwah tauhid, dakwah para nabi dan rasul’.

¹⁶ Original title: ‘Metode dakwah salafiyah’.

¹⁷ Original title: ‘Al-wala wal bara, sebuah keharusan’.

¹⁸ Original title: ‘Loyalitas dan kebencian yang disyariatkan’.

Like other fundamentalist groups, the purist Salafi community are characterised by high discipline in that their behaviours are regulated by strict interpretation of religious texts. Through their website, the Salafis emphasize the importance of following the ways the prophet Muhammad and the early generations of Muslims lived their lives. So, they grow their beards and shave their moustache and persuade Muslims to do so because they believe they are religious obligations written in the valid religious texts and practiced by the prophet and his companions. The Salafi men prefer Arabic style of dress such as *jalabiyya* (flowing robes), *imamah* (turbans), and trousers right to their ankle, and women appear in *niqab* (flowing black dress and veil) covering their whole body. In the eyes of the Salafis, this is a religious command aimed as a way to distinguish Muslims from pagan people and non-Muslims. Muslims are prohibited from imitating them in any aspects of their life including personal affairs such as beards and dress code (see ‘Let your beards grow’¹⁹).

In their website, the Salafis promote a belief that men-women relationship must be regulated by religious rules. Like Muslim majority, the Salafis believe that adultery (*zina*) is strongly prohibited by God as written in the religious texts. But, they go further to close anything that brings people to commit adultery. So, they strongly oppose ‘liberal’ relationship between man and woman such as dating and strongly argue for the importance of separation of men and women in public places. Even, they believe that watching TV and films is prohibited as it can persuade people to do adultery (see ‘Watch out! Going out is a step to adultery 1-2’²⁰).

3. Terrorism and jihad

For the Salafis, the internet has become a medium to repudiate those who wage jihad, but actually use it for their own interests and purposes. In their opinions, those involved in 9/11 attacks and Bali bombings in 2003 and 2005 were not *mujahid* (the holy way fighters) or *syahid* (martyr). Rather, they were terrorists who created disorder, damage and disruption among society and had nothing to do with jihad as required in Islam. The Salafis call them the narrow-minded people and the ignorant of the true jihad. Referring to Syaikh Ibn Uthaymin of Saudi Arabia, one of the main Salafi authorities, the Salafis assert that jihad cannot reduced to a single understanding as it has multiple meanings. First, *jihad al-nafs* (self-jihad): conquering one’s self in one’s attempts by earning religious knowledge to obey

¹⁹ Original title: ‘Biarkan jenggot anda tumbuh’.

²⁰ Original title: ‘Awat! Pacaran = mendekati zina 1 and 2’.

God's command and oppose those who call against Him. Second, *jihad al-munafiqin*: fighting against hypocrites with true religious knowledge, not weapon. Lastly, *jihad al-kuffar*: fighting against unbelievers who attack Muslim territory and declare a war to Muslims (see 'Islamic perspective of terrorism'²¹; 'Misunderstanding jihad'²²).

The Salafis argue further that jihad in terms of waging a war cannot be declared unless it meets the required conditions. First, when a Muslim is facing an enemy in a battlefield. Second, when a Muslim country is under attack by enemy. Third, the *imam* (the leader of Muslim country) declares the jihad and commands all Muslims to do so. Finally, when armed jihad is regarded as a necessity solution under certain conditions and considerations. The Salafis believe that current Muslim world does not meet the required conditions to wage a military jihad and those who were involved in violent attacks on non-Muslims are not *mujahid*, but rather terrorists. Hence, these people, for the Salafis, are not the followers of the *manhaj al-salaf*, a method implemented by the Prophet and the early Muslim generations, in understanding and practicing jihad (see 'Disclosing the thoughts of a master of terrorism'²³; 'How to respond properly to Bali bombing'²⁴; 'They are terrorists'²⁵).

4. Politics

Through their website, the Salafis also disseminate their political ideas. They believe that those who get involved in politics as a means to establish an Islamic state are not the followers of the Salaf. They argue that ideological basis used by these people to justify their political activities is a forbidden religious innovation (*bid'ah*) that has no precedence in the practice of the Prophet Muhammad and the first generations of Muslims. This ideology, known as *tawhid hakimiyyah*, refers to a belief that *hakimiyyah* (sovereignty) belongs only to Allah and governance can only be ascribed to Him so that it is one of the main elements of *tawhid* (true monotheism). The Salafis reject this conception arguing that it is a *bid'ah* created as a political weapon to support the political tendency of the politico Salafi groups such as Ikhwan al-Muslimin. Such a doctrine implies the necessity of *takfir* (declaring a Muslim as an infidel), a doctrine that is also rejected by the Salafis. To support their argument, the Salafis employ a fatwa issued by Hai'ah Kibar al-Ulama (The committee of

²¹ Original title: 'Makna terorisme dalam pandangan Islam'.

²² Original title: 'Salah kaprah dalam jihad'.

²³ Original title: 'Membongkar pemikiran sang Begawan teroris'.

²⁴ Original title: 'Menyikapi bom Bali'.

²⁵ Original title: 'Mereka adalah teroris'.

prominent Salafi ulama) of Saudi Arabia saying that *tawhid hakimiyyah* is a *bid'ah* that no one of *ahl al-sunnah* (the supporters of Sunnah) agrees with it (see 'There is no such a *tawhid hakimiyyah* in Islam'²⁶; 'More about *tawhid hakimiyyah*'²⁷).

The apolitical stance of the purist Salafis is seen in their postings regarding the doctrine of the prohibition of rebellion against a ruler. According to the Salafis, it is a religious obligation for Muslims to "listen to and obey" a ruler, no matter he is good or bad, just or unjust, as long as he does not order to oppose against the God's laws. Muslims are not allowed to oppose the ruler of a country where they can observe their faith peacefully. They argue that any forms of opposition against a ruler ranging from criticism, demonstration to rebellion are illegal religious innovations (*bid'ah*) that have no precedence in the religious texts and practice of the first generations of Muslims (*Salaf*). Following a ruler constitutes obedience to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (Qur'an Surah al-Nisa: 59). Instead of rebellion, Muslims should give advice in private and pray for a ruler of a country who ruled unjustly as practiced by the companions of the prophet, the followers of Sunnah and the Salafi authorities (see 'The religious obligation of compliance with God, the prophet and the ruler'²⁸; 'The religious law of rebellion – a obligation of giving advice to a ruler'²⁹).

Therefore, it is seen in other postings that the Salafis reject political activities aimed at taking over of a country and establishing an Islamic state as promoted by the politico-Islamic fundamentalist movements such as Ikwan al-Muslimin and Hizb ut-Tahrir. They argue that such political activities are un-Islamic and forbidden religious innovations (*bid'ah*) because these will likely bring about disorder and great disadvantages to Muslims such as the government restriction of observing their faith. In addition, the argument that taking over a country is necessary when its ruler does not apply Islamic law is flawed as it resulted from the politico-fundamentalist groups' misunderstanding of Islamic state. Referring to Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), the main early Salafi ideologue, the Salafis believe that a country can be regarded as an Islamic state if Muslims constitute the majority and they preserve and observe their Islamic faith in public as well as in private. It is the presence of Muslims as majority, not political system, which determines a country to be regarded as an Islamic state. An Islamic state can be a republic country like Indonesia or monarchy like Saudi Arabia. In this case, the Salafis assert, Muslims are ordered to cooperate with the ruler and prohibited to

²⁶ Original title: 'Tidak ada istilah tauhid hakimiyyah/mulkiyyah dalam pandangan Islam'.

²⁷ Original title: 'Lagi, tauhid mulkiyyah/hakimiyyah bukan dari Islam'.

²⁸ Original title: 'Perintah taat kepada Allah, Rasul dan pemerintah'.

²⁹ Original title: 'Hukum memberontak- perintah menasehati penguasa'.

oppose against him as exemplified by the practice of the early Muslim generations (see ‘Caliphate as practiced by the prophet’³⁰; ‘Constructing a true Islamic caliphate’³¹).

C. Cyberwars: a polemical use of the internet

The Salafis seem to use the internet as a place to wage a war against those regarded as their eternal enemy. Cyberspace has become a new place of cyberwars in which off-line enmity and conflict are extended online. Through their website, the Salafis criticise and condemn Muslim individuals or groups believed as to have violated the purist version of *manhaj al-salaf* (the method of the pious forefathers) in understanding and practicing Islam. Their attacks are not only targeted to Muslim groups regarded as not the supporters of Salafism, but also to those who proclaimed themselves as the Salafis.

1. Syi’ah

It appears that the Salafis employ the internet as an effective medium to attack Syi’ah Muslims (Shiites). In the eyes of the Salafis, the Syi’ahs are not true Muslims as they have allegedly violated some principles of the pristine Islam. They reject the Shiite doctrine of *taqiyyah*, a doctrine that a Muslim can conceal his or her faith before those regarded as enemy including other Muslims in order to preserve his or her faith and prevent himself or herself from harmful treatment. For the Salafis, the doctrine is a violation of the true meaning of *taqiyyah* in that concealing one’s faith can only be taken before unbelievers who will likely put him or her in danger if she or he reveals his or her faith. Moreover, the Syi’ah attitude of disguising faith before other Muslims (non-Syi’ah) indicates that they are not true Muslims, but hypocrites (*munafiqin*). To support their attack, the Salafis use particular Quranic verses (al-Nisa: 97-98; Alu Imran: 28; al-Nahl 106), which they believe deal with true *taqiyyah*, and refer to their ideologues such as Ibn Taymiyyah (see ‘Disclosing the Syi’ah: *taqiyyah*’³²).

The Salafis also posted articles condemning the Syi’ah belief in *mut’ah*, a doctrine that a Muslim is permitted to marry a woman, Muslim or non-Muslims, for a period of time, and the infallibility of their *imams* (supreme spiritual leaders). They regard the Shi’ah as not the followers of the *nash* (religious texts) as they allegedly have changed the Qur’an and

³⁰ Original title: ‘Khilafah di atas manhaj nubuwwah’.

³¹ Original title: ‘Mendirikan khalifah islamiyah dengan benar’.

³² Original title: ‘Membongkar kesesatan Syiah: Taqiyyah’.

Sunnah for their interests and purposes. The Salafis also believe that Syi'ah are not the followers of the *Salaf* and accuse them of spreading hatred and lies about the *Salaf*, the Prophet's wives and his companions. Due to these violations, the Salafis conclude that it impossible to establish a dialogue and rapprochement between the Syi'ah and the Sunni Muslims (see series 'Disclosing the Syi'ah: *mut'ah* marriage'; 'Worshipping *imams*'; 'Hatred against the Prophet's wives'; 'Fake love of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bait*)'; 'Denigrating the Prophet's companions (*sahabah*)'; 'A rejection of the Syi'ah doctrine of Mahdi'³³).

2. Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL)

The Salafis posted some articles in their website aimed at attacking Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL; Liberal Islam Network).³⁴ For the Salafis, the idea of religious pluralism promoted by the members of JIL seriously contravenes a principle that Islam is the only religion accepted by God. In their attempts to unmask what they believe as the JIL's lies, the Salafis refer to the religious texts saying Islam as the final chain of the religious transmissions. They argue that Islam as the last revelation encompasses all religions brought by previous prophets such as Judaism and Christianity. This is not only mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah, but also supported by the first Muslim generations and the Salafi authorities. In other words, they claim Islam is the only true religion so that the idea which promotes a religious unity and calls for a common platform among various religious adherents is undoubtedly unacceptable. They call those who support religious pluralism, such as the members of JIL, *thagut* (evil) due to their lost of faith in the doctrine of *al-wala wal-bara* (loving and supporting the fellow Muslims, and deserting and showing enmity to unbelievers) (see 'Uncovering the mask of JIL, Ahlus Sunnah shut their mouth'³⁵).

In their postings, the Salafis also label the members of JIL as the followers of evil (*shaitan*), the servant of reason (*'aql*), neo-Mu'tazilis, and the supporters of the method of unbelievers (*kuffar*) due to their use of reason to understand and interpret texts (*nash*) of the

³³ Original series titles: 'Membongkar kesesatan Syiah: nikah mut'ah'; 'Memuja imamnya'; 'Benci pada istri Nabi'; 'Cinta palsu pada ahlul bait'; 'Menghina sahabat Nabi'; 'Al-Qur'an diubah-ubah'; 'Bantahan singkat terhadap keyakinan Syiah tentang Mahdi'.

³⁴ Jaringan Islam Liberal (the Liberal Islam Network) is a network of young Indonesian intellectuals and activists that promote a new interpretation of Islam characterized by following insights: belief in the openness of *ijtihad* (personal or collective (re) interpretation of the religious texts); the relative, open, and plural truth; emphasize on the ethical- religious spirit, not the literal meaning of the text; support for minorities and the oppressed; and freedom of belief and faith. For details see N.T. B. Harjanto (2003); Hooker (2004) Ali (n.d.); Nurdin (2005).

³⁵ Original title: 'Membongkar kedok JIL, Ahlus sunnah membungkamnya'.

Qur'an and Sunnah, rather than the methods practiced by the Salaf. They consider religious pluralism promoted by JIL as “cheap and obsolete ideology” and a blasphemy to Islam. For the Salafis, the members of the JIL are undoubtedly the supporters of forbidden *bid'ah* and constitute the Jewish-Christian conspiracy to destroy Islam and Muslims. As a result, they encourage the ruler of Islamic country to bring the members of JIL to court and sentence them to death, if necessary, due to their blasphemous thoughts of Islamic principles (see series of ‘Uncovering the mask of JIL: ‘the followers and the worshippers of evil’; ‘A call for a religious unity’; ‘the true unity of the Salaf’; ‘Open trial of JIL’³⁶).

3. Hizbut Tahrir (HT)

The cyberwar is also directed to Hizbut Tahrir (HT; the Liberation Party), a transnational fundamentalist movement whose operating arena is politics. The Salafis point out that supporters of Hizbut Tahrir are not the true followers of the Quran and Sunnah though they claim that they operate under the guidance of the two main sources of Islam. They are mistaken, the Salafis assert, in that they defy the method of the Salaf as seen in their goals and methods to achieve them. The Hizbut Tahrir use of politics to establish a global Islamic state (*khilafah islamiyah*) brings the Salafis to accuse them of ignoring the prophet's method of Islamic propagation. In his mission, the Prophet called people to the true monotheism (*tawhid*) and submission to Allah (*ibadah*), not to political takeover of the existing authority or the establishment of the Islamic caliphate. Political victory is not a goal of the Islamic propagation, but rather as a necessary result of the establishment of society that guided by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Hizbut Tahrir, according to the Salafis, has ignored the core of Islamic mission (a call for *tawhid*), and prioritized its periphery (politics and Islamic state) (see ‘Politics that prescribed by *shariah*, a repudiation of HT’³⁷; ‘The prophets’ method of propagation, a repudiation of HT’³⁸; ‘Uncovering the veil of Hizbut Tahrir’³⁹).

Their postings reveal that Salafis also attack the high political tendency of Hizbut Tahrir. The Salafis view this ideology as a result of Hizbut Tahrir's misperception of Islamic state. They argue that Islamic state is not a territory in which Islamic law is applied to all

³⁶ Original titles: series articles ‘Membongkar kedok JIL: ‘Pengikut dan pemuja iblis’; ‘seruan penyatuan agama’; ‘Persatuan hakiki ala Salaf’; ‘Pengadilan terbuka atas mereka’).

³⁷ Original title: ‘Politik yang syar’i- bantahan atas HT’.

³⁸ Original title: ‘Manhaj dakwah para nabi- bantahan atas HT’.

³⁹ Original titles: ‘Membongkar selubung Hizbut Tahrir’; ‘Membongkar kesesatan Hizbut Tahrir- Khilafah Islamiyah’.

aspects of society such as political system and governance as Hizbut Tahrir believes. Rather, it is a country where Muslims constitute the majority and they observe their religion faithfully, no matter what kind of political system and governance is applied. So, the assumption promoted by the supporters of Hizbut Tahrir that there is no currently Islamic state (*dar al-Islam*) so that it is a religious obligation to establish an Islamic caliphate expresses their ignorance of the Quran, Sunnah and the *manhaj al-salaf* (see ‘Unmasking Hizbut Tahrir – who is it?’⁴⁰; ‘Terorism in the Islamic perspective- a refutation of HT’⁴¹).

The Salafi attack is further directed to Hizbut Tahrir’s reluctance of acknowledging *hadis ahad*, a kind of Hadis (sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad) that reported by a single companion of the Prophet (*sahabah*), as a valid religious source of Islamic doctrines. Referring to a fatwa by Syaikh al-Albani, the Salafis stress that this doctrine is a denigration of the *sahabah* as part of the Salaf whose credibility is not questioned. This also indicates that the supporters of Hizbut Tahrir have developed religious innovations (*bid’ah*). Instead of following the method of the Salaf in understanding the Hadis, Hizbut Tahrir has followed the method of Mu’tazilah that prioritizes reason over faith (*iman*) in understanding religious texts (see ‘Fatwa tentang kesesatan Hizbut Tahrir’; ‘Siapakah Hizbut Tahrir?’; ‘Bantahan ilmiyyah atas kesesatan akidah HT’). The Salafis also condemn the Hizbut Tahrir for their cooperation with Muslim groups who have defied the method of the Salaf such as Syi’ah saying that it is an expression of their lack of *al-bara wal-bara* (a doctrine that a Muslim must love and support fellow Muslims, but desert and show enmity to unbelievers) (see ‘Uncovering the mask of Hizbut Tahrir’⁴²).

4. *Ikhwan al-Muslimin (IM)*

In addition, the Salafis employ cyberspace as a place to attack Ikhwan al-Muslimin (the Muslim Brotherhood), another transnational fundamentalist Muslim movement originated from Egypt. Their attacks are focused particularly on Sayyid Qutb, the movement’s ideologue. Qutb believes that at the moment there is no Muslim society and Islamic country because there is no society or country that appoints Allah as the only ruler, applies Islamic law and lives an Islamic life. He called them a modern version of *jahiliyah* (ignorant) society, which existed before the coming of Islam in Mecca and was ignorant of

⁴⁰ Original title: ‘Membongkar kesesatan Hizbut Tahrir’.

⁴¹ Original title: ‘Terorisme dalam timbangan Islam- bantahan atas HT’.

⁴² Original title: ‘Membongkar selubung Hizbut Tahrir II’.

the true Islam. He further introduced *takfir*, a doctrine that the ruler of a country who does not implement Allah's rules in all aspect of community life can be declared as unbeliever so that he can be toppled and replaced by a true Muslim ruler to establish an Islamic state.

By posting articles, the Salafis claim that Qutb's ideas of *takfir*, modern *jahiliyyah* society and Islamic state are clearly misleading. He was mistaken when he said that *hakimiyyah* (sovereignty) was an important element of *tawhid* (true monotheism). For the Salafis, this resulted from Qutb's misunderstanding of the Muslim's creed of *La ilah illallah* (there is no 'ilah' but Allah), in which he reduced the meaning of the word *ilah* into "the ruler". This is clearly in contrast with the Salaf who interpreted the word as "the only one who has right to be worshiped". For the Salafis, Qutb's ideas represent the thinking of the supporters of *bid'ah* and reflect the influences of Mu'tazilah, Syi'ah, and Khawarij, the groups that oppose the *manhaj al-salaf* (see 'The danger of Sayyid Qutb's idea of *takfir*'⁴³).

5. Internal conflict

It is interesting to note that the Salafis also utilise cyberspace as a place to wage a cyberwar against other Salafi groups, but believed no longer embrace the true Salafi ways. This use shows that the internet is a place where internal conflicts among the Salafi supporters in Indonesia are extended into cyberspace. The fragmentation among the Salafis began when a group of them were accused of being *sururis*, the supporters of the views promoted by Muhammad ibn Surur, one of the main proponents of politico-Salafis who severely criticised the Saudi government in the case of the presence of American troops in the Arabian soil during the Gulf War. This group developed *dakwah* (propagation) activities by establishing two Salafi foundations, Yayasan al-Sofwah (al-Sofwah Foundation) led by Muhamad al-Khalaf (?) and Majlis al-Turas al-Islami (the Assembly of Islamic Heritage) directed by Abu Nida. These foundations were believed as to have established links with overseas foundations that support Ibn Surur, namely al-Muntada al-Islami Foundation of London and al-Jam'iyyah Ihya al-Turats of Kuwait (see 'A testimony of Ustadz Muhammad Umar as-Sewed'⁴⁴; 'Ihya ut Turats is a deviant foundation'⁴⁵; 'Disclosing the crimes of Ihya Turas, the enemy of the Salafis'⁴⁶; 'The danger of Ji network of Kuwait and al-Turas'⁴⁷).

⁴³ Original title: 'Bahaya pemikiran takfir Sayyid Qutub'.

⁴⁴ Original title: 'Persaksian al-Ustadz Muhammad Umar as-Sewed'.

⁴⁵ Original title: 'Ihya ut Turats menyimpang dalam manhaj'.

⁴⁶ Original title: 'Membongkar kejahatan Ihya Turas – musuh Salafiyyin'.

⁴⁷ Original title: 'Bahaya jaringan Ji dari Kuwait dan al-Turas'.

Through their website, the Salafis have focused their attacks on these two foundations. Umar as-Sewed in his postings asserts that al-Sofwah Foundation does not follow the *manhaj al-salaf* as it is closely affiliated to al-Muntada Foundation of London led by Muhammad ibn Surur. Sewed refers to Syaikh Rabi' al-Madkhaly, a Salafi authority in the Middle East, who said that "if the foundation (al-Sofwah) is similar to al-Muntada of London, we think, it will be a major enemy for *dakwah* Salaf movement in Indonesia". He argues that those involved in al-Sofwah Foundation are not the Salafis because they support Ibn Surur and Ikhwan al-Muslimin, but they pretend to be Salafis. To support his arguments, Sewed provides evidence that al-Sofwah's deviation from the *manhaj al-salaf* is seen in its attempts to publish al-Bayan, a periodical that is published by al-Muntada of London, and books written by Sururi authorities, support the activities of groups regarded as *ahl al-bid'ah* (the supporters of religious innovations) such as Tarekat Sufi,⁴⁸ Ikhwan al-Muslimin, Negara Islam Indonesia (NII), and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera,⁴⁹ and invite the Sururi authorities to give lectures in Indonesia such as Ibrahim al-Duwasy (see 'A testimony of Muhammad Umar as-Sewed'⁵⁰).

The extension of internal conflict into cyberspace can also be seen in the Salafis' attack on the Majelis al-Turas al-Islamy of Indonesia. The Salafis accuse those involved in the foundation of being deviant from the true method of the Salaf and following the methods adopted by Ikhwan al-Muslimin. They are considered as heretics (*mubtadi'*) as they are inclined to support the Sururi ideas by getting themselves involved in political activities and parliament. This is supported by a fact that the foundation has established a network with Jam'iyyah Ihya al-Turas of Kuwait, a foundation that supports the politico-Salafi movement led by Abdul Rahman Abd al-Khaliq. Hence, the Salafis call those who support the Majlis al-Turas of Indonesia 'the puppets (*boneka*) of Abdur al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq'. Jamiyyah al-Turas of Kuwait provided Majelis al-Turas with considerable financial support by which the latter could promote the Sururi-Ikhwani ideology in Indonesia. For the Salafis, the fund allocated by Jamiyya al-Turas of Kuwait has brought about the fragmentation and conflict among the Salafis in Indonesia, which is highly prohibited according to the Quran and

⁴⁸ Sufi Tarekat (Islamic mysticism brotherhood; Sufism; tasawwuf) is a school of thought that promotes the inner or mystical dimensions of Islam. See e.g. Godlas (2000).

⁴⁹ PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera [Prosperous Justice Party]) is an Indonesian political party whose ideology is Islam and founded in 1998. It has a close association with Ikhwan al-Muslimin and other campus-based *dakwah* movements in Indonesia. The party won 7.3% of the popular vote and 45 out of 550 seats in the 2004 legislative election making it the seventh-largest party in parliament.

⁵⁰ Original title: 'Persaksian al-Ustadz Muhammad as-Sewed'.

Sunnah (see ‘Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq and Ihya al-Turas’⁵¹; ‘Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq, a heretic’⁵²; ‘Questions and answers about Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq and al-Turas’⁵³; ‘Ihya al-Turas - Ulama do not recommend it’⁵⁴; ‘Ihya al-Turas is a deviant foundation – the puppet of Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Khaliq’⁵⁵).

Moreover, the Salafis accuse the Ihya al-Turas of Kuwait and Majlis al-Turas al-Islami of Indonesia of having breached the principles of the *manhaj al-salaf* because of the following reasons. First, they do not obey the ruler as they establish their own system of governance such as pledging an oath to their leaders (*bai’at*) and developing underground system cells for recruiting particular members who are responsible to particular regions or mosques. Second, the supporters of the two foundations do not follow the Salaf’s enmity and isolation (*al-bara*) of those regarded as the deviants from the *manhaj al-salaf* as seen in their invitation to these people to give lectures and attend seminars. Finally, those involved in these foundations do not follow the *manhaj al-salaf* in dealing with the supporters of Salafism (*salafiyyin*). They do not show their support and love (*al-wala*) to the ulama of the *manhaj al-salaf* by not inviting them to give lectures and advice and they bring the *salafiyyin* into conflict and fragmentation through their funds (see ‘Disclosing the crimes of Ihya al-Turas – loyalty to the ruler’⁵⁶).

Therefore, the Salafis remind the true followers of the Salaf of the danger of these foundations and ban publishers and bookshops to publish and sell works by the supporters of these foundations. To support this, the Salafis refer again to the *fatwas* issued by the Salafi authorities in the Middle East such as Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali, Ubaid al-Jabiri, Muhammad bin Hadi al-Madkhali, and Muqbil bin Hadi (see *Fatwas on Ihya al-Turas*⁵⁷; *Ihya al-Turas is a deviant foundation – khilafiyah & ijthaidiyah*⁵⁸ ‘An open call for publishers and bookshop owners’⁵⁹; ‘Beware of al-Sofwah and Ihya al-Turas’⁶⁰).

⁵¹ Original title: ‘Abdurrahman Abdul Khaliq dan Ihya Turas’.

⁵² Original title: ‘Abdurrahman Abdul Khaliq – seorang *mubtadi*’.

⁵³ Original title: ‘Soal-jawab tentang Abdurrahman Abdul Khaliq & at-Turas’.

⁵⁴ Original title: ‘Ihya Turas – ulama tidak merekomendasi’.

⁵⁵ Original title: ‘Ihya Turas menyimpang – boneka Abdurrahman Abdul Khaliq’.

⁵⁶ Original title: ‘Membongkar kejahatan Ihya’ut Turas – taat pemerintah’.

⁵⁷ Original title: ‘Ihya ut Turas menyimpang dalam manhaj – fatwa ulama’.

⁵⁸ Original title: ‘Ihya ut Turas menyimpang dalam manhaj – khilaf & ijthaidiyah’.

⁵⁹ Original title: ‘Seruan terbuka bagi penerbit dan pemilik toko buku’.

⁶⁰ Original title: ‘Hati-hati dengan al-Sofwah dan Ihya Turas’.

D. Responding to contemporary issues: a contextual use of the internet

It appears that the Salafi community use the internet not only as a tool for promoting their Salafi ideology and practices, but also as a medium for expressing their concern and views about contemporary issues of local and global society. This reflects an inescapable paradox of religious fundamentalism. On one hand, it is a transnational movement that operates across national borders so that it challenges the nation-state territorially as well as ideologically. On the other hand, religious fundamentalism cannot ignore the current issues of the country where it operates as its attempts to scale up its influences or at least preserve its presence in a local (national) arena.

My investigation on the content of their website reveals that the Salafis use the internet as a tool to show their interest in the current socio-religious issues in Indonesia. In their response to the Tsunami wave that hit Aceh in 2004 and earthquakes in Yogyakarta in 2006, the Salafis consulted a Salafi authority of Saudi Arabia asking for *fatwas* as guidance for Indonesian Muslims to deal with issues resulted from the Tsunami. They posted the *fatwas* on some Tsunami-related issues such as how to deal with tens of thousand bodies of the dead Muslims, whether it was permitted to work together with non- Salafi people in providing help and relief to the survivors, and condemnation on the Christian missionary works attempted by some international aid organizations to convert the victims, mostly Muslim children, to Christianity disguised in a humanitarian aid (see ‘The *ulama*⁶¹ guidance on how to deal with earthquake and Tsunami in Indonesia’; ‘Advice of how to deal with post-Tsunami Christianization in Indonesia’⁶²).

The Salafis’ response to local issues can also be seen in their postings on the issue of al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah, a new group that declared its leader had received a revelation and was appointed by God a new prophet. The Salafis view that that al-Qiyadah al-Islaiyah is a misled group because its supporters believe in a new prophet after the Prophet Muhammad and the religious unity of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, reject the Hadis as a valid religious text, and interpret the Qur’an not based on accepted methods (*tafsir*) as practiced by the Salaf. There is no doubt that, the Salafis assert, these doctrines promoted by the new group are unacceptable and a serious contravention of the principles of Islamic faith (*aqidah*) so that the group’s presence in a Muslim society can incite social disorder (see ‘The new prophet is

⁶¹ Original title: ‘Bimbingan ulama menghadapi gempa dan Tsunami di Indonesia’.

⁶² Original title: ‘Nasehat dan renungan dalam masalah kristenisasi paska musibah di Indonesia’.

al-Masih al-Maw'ud – al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyyah is a deluded group'⁶³; 'The new prophet's teachings have incited social disruption in Yogyakarta'⁶⁴; 'The new prophet's Quranic interpretation – disclosing al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah'⁶⁵).

In addition, the Salafis make use of cyberspace as a tool to respond to international issues. Their postings show that they are aware of global issues and events, particularly those are concerned with Islam and the Muslim world. Responding to the crisis of the Muslim world such as in Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq, the Salafis use the internet as a tool to communicate their belief that crisis has resulted from the Muslims' negligence of the true Islamic teachings so that they are not under the God guidance. This has made Muslims weak and provided enemies with opportunities to dominate and destroy the Muslim countries. In Lebanon, according to Salafis, Hizbullah is a Syi'ah group that has infringed the principles of Islamic faith, insulted the honourable companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and changed the Qur'an just like the Jews changed their scriptures. Quoting a *fatwa* issued by Shalih bin Muhammad al-Luhadain of Saudi Arabia, the Salafis label the group not as a party of God (*hizbullah*), but rather a party of evil (*hizb al-syaithan*). The same is true for crisis in Palestine and Iraq. Hamas in Palestine is a fanatic group (*hizbi*) that follows the sectarian ideology and ignore the true ideology of Islam as practiced by the Salaf. Those who fight against the US invasion in Iraq are Syi'ah who slaughtered the supporters of the Sunnah (*ahl al-sunnah*). These groups have not waged jihad as prescribed by God in the Qur'an and exemplified by the prophet and his companions. So, through their website, the Salafis suggest that the only solution to the crisis in order to gain victory over the enemies is that Muslim must return to the pure Islam as practiced by the prophet and the first generations of Muslims (*the salaf*) (see 'A fatwa on the crisis in Libanon part 1-2'⁶⁶; 'Syaiikh al-Luhadain: Hizbullah is hizbusy syaithan (the party of evil)'; Hamas is a deviant jihad fighters'⁶⁷; 'On America in Iraq'⁶⁸).

Other international issues responded by the Salafis through their website are suicide bombing, particularly one occurred in Riyadh in 2004, and a call for boycott of Danish products as a reaction to the publication of the cartoons of the prophet Muhammad in a

⁶³ Original title: 'Rasul baru itu al-Masih al-Maw'ud– sesatnya al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah'.

⁶⁴ Original title: 'Ajaran rasul baru meresahkan Yogya'.

⁶⁵ Original title: 'Tafsir al-Quran gaya rasul baru– membongkar kesesatan al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah'.

⁶⁶ Original title: 'Fatwa ulama dalam menyikapi krisis Libanon (part 1-2)'.

⁶⁷ Original title: 'Hamas adalah kelompok jihad menyimpang'.

⁶⁸ Original title: 'Menyoal Amerika-Iraq'.

Danish newspaper. In response to these issues, they posted articles containing *fatwas* issued by the senior Salafis authorities in Saudi Arabia. A posted fatwa says that suicide attack is prohibited in Islam as it violates the sacredness of the Muslim lands, results in fear and disorder in society, can kill people that should be protected according to Islamic law such as children and women, and leads to the destruction of buildings and property that should be protected under Islamic law (see ‘A fatwa of the senior *ulama* on suicide bombings’⁶⁹). In regard to the boycott of Danish products, the Salafis posted a fatwa saying that it is obligatory for all Muslims to boycott a country if their ruler orders to do so because it can be useful for their country and disadvantageous to the enemy and by doing so they shows their obedience to the ruler. But, if the ruler does not command to do so, Muslims are allowed to use or not to use the country’s products (see ‘A fatwa on the boycott of Danish products’⁷⁰).

E. Building local and global networks: a communicative use of the internet

Furthermore, my investigation reveals that the Salafi group utilise the internet as a medium to maintain solidarity and develop local (national) and global networks among the supporters of Salafism. This means that a local Salafi network can have a global repercussion and vice versa. Through their website, the Salafis have developed links to other local websites that also promote the ideology of Salafism. They have built affiliation with ten local websites operated by the supporters of Salafism located in various cities in Jawa, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. The affiliation can be seen, among others, in their reposting articles or news previously posted by other Salafi websites, such as *As-Syariah Online Magazine* (www.asysyariah.com).

The Salafis not only develop networks with local proponents of Salafism, but also with global Salafi supporters. Their website indicates that the Salafis have developed links with global Salafi websites in various parts of the world. They include nineteen Arabic websites and eighteen English websites, which located in Middle East (sixteen websites), Europe (thirteen websites) and USA (eight websites). Most of them are privately operated websites, but some are state-owned ones, such as <http://quran.al-islam.com> and <http://hadith.al-islam.com>, that operated by the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowment, and Propagation. These websites are clearly dedicated to propagate the Salafism worldwide. They range from the personal webs of the Salafi authorities in the Middle East,

⁶⁹ Original title: ‘Fatwa ulama senior tentang bom bunuh diri’.

⁷⁰ Original title: ‘Fatwa ulama tentang boikot atas produk Denmark’.

such as the sites of Ibn Baz, Utsaimin, and Rabi al-Madkhali, to online Quran and Hadis services. Based on this, I argue that building links with other websites enables the Salafis to communicate with other local and global Salafi groups and enforce the propagation of the Salafism through cyberspace to a wider audience across the regional and national borders. It also suggests that a local Salafi community (the purist Indonesian Salafis) can have a global impact in that they constitute as part of global network of Salafism and at the same time the global Salafi network can have a local repercussion as its presence is needed to enforce the existence of a local Salafi community.

F. Interpreting the Salafi use of the internet

The interaction between Salafism and the internet as I explained above can be seen as an example of the process of “cultured technology” (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005). It shows ways how the Salafis as an Islamic fundamentalist group use the internet, reshape it, and make it as part of their culture. This process involves the Salafi adoption and adaptation of the internet, as well as adaptation into it, to the interests and purposes of their community. It also reveals the Salafis’ ability to respond to the global development of information technology so that it not only has assisted them to survive, but also to reshape the global technology for their religious needs and purposes. It is true that the penetration of the internet has not dramatically altered the basic foundations of the Salafi communities. But, there is no doubt that in some degrees the Salafis have ability to localize the internet by altering and reconstructing its ethics and usage for their own agenda.

The ways the Salafis make use of the internet to articulate their identities also exemplify the process of “spiritualizing the internet” (Campbell 2005). Through this process, the Salafis adopt and confer a kind of religious legitimacy on the internet for their spiritual purposes and values. This may involve a process of negotiation between the Salafi religious worldviews and the ethos of the internet as a product of the profane worldviews. As Campbell says, it “highlights that technology is embedded in a social process of negotiation between individuals and groups who inevitably shape them towards their own desire and values” (p. 4). What distinguishes the Salafis, or religious communities in general, from the non-religious groups in this process is that the former endorse and utilise the new media for their needs and interests within “a spiritually rich worldview with meanings and values that might be absent” in the latter groups (Kliver and Cheong 2007, p. 1125).

Moreover, it is commonly believed that the internet is a global phenomenon with global implications. The Salafi use of the internet in Indonesia, however, demonstrates a phenomenon of the internet within a particular community and nation. To some degrees, it constitutes as an example of “the localization process of the internet” as a global force (Hill & Sen 2002, 2008; Lim 2002, 2004). It shows how the Salafis have localized the global force of the internet for their community needs. They personalize the internet for their religious interests in the sense that they use it to a maximum benefit as a tool to disseminate the Salafi identities and develop the Salafi networks. They also localize cyberspace for their local purposes in that they utilize it as means to respond to contemporary issues within the limits of socio-religious categories of the nation.

The phenomenon of religious use of the internet by the Salafis reflects the localized appropriation process of the global media communication (Thompson 1999). While communication technology operates on a global scale, this profane product of modern society is embraced by individuals or groups in accordance with specific-temporal locales where they are situated. The Salafi use of the internet as I explained above can be said as an example of this localized appropriation of a global media. It involves particular group (the Salafis) who are situated in a specific social-historical contexts (Indonesia) and make sense of the global media (the internet) and incorporate it into their purposes (promoting the Salafi identities). The Salafis have transformed the internet into a medium which is adapted to the practical context of their movement. Hence, the internet as a global media has not eradicated the localized character of its uses as experienced by the Salafis in the Indonesian context, but rather has developed what Thompson calls “the axis of globalized diffusion and localized appropriation” (Thompson 1999, p. 174). The Salafi experience of using the internet confirms a “dual fact”, if not a paradox, that the information technology has become increasingly global, but its application remains local and contextual.

Finally, I argue that the localization of the internet experienced by the Salafis reflects the dynamics of the community in constructing and struggling over their identity. Identity formation is a fundamental source of meaning for human experiences and existence. Castells (1997) asserts that creating identities, particularly collective identity that shared among individuals, plays an important role in the current world socio-political changes because it has become “a primary driving force in contemporary world history”. The internet has facilitated the Salafi community to construct and communicate what Castell calls “resistance identities” (Castells 1997, p. 8). These resistance identities play a crucial role in fostering the Salafis’

reaction to the global problems facing the Muslim world, which, according to them, resulted from the Muslims' negligence of the true Islamic path. Constructing these identities is important for the Salafis as it is a moral-religious fabric that unites their members into the community of resistance against unbearable violation of the pure Islam. In turn, the Salafis may develop these identities into "project identities" (Castells 1997, p. 8) that aim to change the Muslim world by overthrowing the existing un-Islamic community and creating alternative communities who follow the ideal Islam of the *manhaj al-salaf*.

The interplay between Salafism and the internet characterizes what Turner (2001, p. 133) calls the paradoxes of religion and modernity. It may be true that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is a reaction to modernization that includes capitalism and secularization, but it is inadequate to label it a traditional movement. It can be said as a fundamentalist modernism which attempts "to impose certain conditions of uniformity and coherence on societies in order to reduce the uncertainties that result from the hybridity and complexity of the globalization process". In practice, Islamic fundamentalists are involved in the reinterpretation process in that they attempt to articulate their local and global identities and impose their perspectives over current issues and existing customary practices which perceived as to have defied from the ideal Islam.

Conclusion

An examination of the Salafi use of the internet reveals that cultural spaces are affected by the internet through communal processes, in which the Salafi community adopts and adapts the internet to fulfil its religious purposes. In these processes, the Salafis modify the internet and place it in their communal context. Particularly, they adjust the internet through a localization process within the framework of their network and regulations. This works in two ways: while the Salafis localize the global force of the internet, they themselves are being reshaped to become a part of a globalizing world. This represents the processes of “cultured technology”, appropriation of the global media and spiritualizing technology, which not only facilitate the Salafis to preserve their existence within their traditional boundaries, but also culturally transform the internet into a new type of technology that serves the needs and interests of the Salafi community.

Through these processes, as seen in their use of the website, the Salafis embrace the internet as a means to communicate and promote their Salafi identities. More specifically, the Salafis use the internet as an ideological tool by which they communicate their fundamentalist ideology and disseminate the Salafi *da'wah* (mission) to wider audiences. It appears that the Salafis employ the internet as a polemical means in that they wage a cyberwar against those are regarded as to have violated the authentic Islam as set by the Salaf (the pious predecessors), such as the Shiites, Ikhwan al-Muslimin and Hizbut Tahrir. Cyberspace becomes a new place of cyberwars in which off-line enmity and conflict are extended online. In addition, for the Salafis, internet plays a role as a medium for responding to contemporary issues of local and global societies. Through their website, the Salafis express their views and concerns over global issues such as conflicts and economical and political instability facing countries of the Muslim world as well as local issues such as Tsunami that struck Indonesia in 2004. This reflects the paradox of transnational movements like Salafism; it operates across national borders and challenges the nation-state territorially as well as ideologically, but cannot ignore the current issues of the country where it operates as its attempts to scale up its influences or at least preserve its presence in a local (national) arena. Finally, the Salafi community utilises the internet for communicative uses. They use cyberspace as a medium to maintain solidarity and develop local (national) and global

networks among the local and global supporters of Salafism. This indicates that a local Salafi network can have global effects and a global Salafi network can have influences on a local Salafi community.

This is clearly in contrast to the conception that religion and modernization are inherently incompatible and that religion would fade away in the face of modernization process, as advocated by the secularization theorists. The case of the connection between Salafism and the internet constitutes evidence that religion and modernization co-exist and reinforce one another. It shows that religious communities not only persist when they experience a modernization process, but also use and modify it for their religious needs. In other words, technology modernization does not lead to the death of religion. Rather, it has facilitated religion to survive and acquire new roles and identities in contemporary societies.

In addition, the phenomenon of the Salafi use of the internet serves as a critique of the conviction that the internet presents harmful effects to religious communities as held by Armfield and Holbert (2003), Bockover (2003), Barker (2005), and Dawson (2005). It might be true that to some degree the internet undermine traditional structure of religious communities. But, as this study shows, religious communities are active agents who have the ability to employ opportunities resulted from the internet for their own needs and interests. In other words, the positive effects of the internet outweigh its harmful consequences.

All this shows that religious fundamentalism, as represented by the Salafi movement, is not inherently an anti-modern movement. The findings of this study clearly show that the most conservative religious groups like the Salafi community not only persist in the face of modernization, but also transform realities of modernity like the internet into a new form of modern product that serves well their religious needs and interests. It might be true that fundamentalist communities are religiously ultra-orthodox, but they are technologically modern movements. Religious fundamentalism actually attempts to reconcile realities of modernity with religious traditions by reading values of modernity into authentic sources of Islam. It seeks to respond to modernization process by adopting and adapting its technological expression like the internet to its communal contexts, but doing so without rethinking its traditional theological worldviews. To label fundamentalism as anti-modern means to mischaracterize this global phenomenon of contemporary society. Thus, it is safe to say that religious fundamentalism in general and the Salafi movement in particular constitute not as a separate reality from modernity and globalization process, but rather as an integral part of modernity and globalization.

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